

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Willie Thompson, 78, rancher and former politician

"Before you can be a cowboy, you got to get a degree, a 'PhD.' I got mine when I was 12 years old. . . . First thing we do, we go work on the fence. Those days, they never have it easy, like today--you get a steel post you just pound 'em down, eh? . . . Those days, all with the hole digger, see? So, that's 'PhD,' eh, 'post hole digger.'"

Willie Thompson, Caucasian-Chinese, was born on August 8, 1902, in Kula, Maui. As a boy, he worked on his father's ranch and trained horses for side money.

At the age of 18, Willie moved to Honolulu to train polo horses. Shortly after, he moved to Kona and worked on the McCandless Ranch for three years.

Beginning in 1924, he worked in the construction field, first for a private contractor, then for the County.

Between 1942 and 1968, Willie served on the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors. Today, he ranches on leased lands in Honaunau, South Kona.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Willie Thompson (WT)

January 27, 1981

Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Willie Thompson. Today is January 27, 1981, and we're at his home in Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii.

Okay, Mr. Thompson, can you tell me when you were born?

WT: I was born on August 8, 1902.

WN: And where were you born?

WT: I was born Kula, Maui.

WN: What was your father and mother doing in Kula?

WT: Well, my father was a farmer--rancher. My mother was a housewife. And she taught school little bit, you know, a substitute teacher.

WN: How many acres did your father have?

WT: Well, I don't know, maybe two, three hundred acres, something like that. I'm not too sure.

WN: Did he raise cattle only?

WT: We had some milking cows. We used to milk cows. He raised some pigs. Chickens--he had a chicken farm. Farm--plant our own corn, sweet potatoes, beans, and all that sort of stuff.

WN: Was there cattle on the ranch?

WT: We had some cattle, but, actually, we have more the milking stock. We sold milk to the Kula Sanitorium. Yeah, that was my job in the morning--milk. My other brother helped me milk. When I go to school later on, on the way to school, we delivered milk. Yeah. We never had no barn to milk cows in. You milk 'em right outside, you know. Those days, there were no milk inspectors. They never have all these laws where you have to, you know, [grade] A, B,

or. . . . Like today, you have the milk inspectors, and these Board of Health people, and all that. Those days, no. There was no such thing. Well, the Kula Sanitorium, that's about one mile from where we live, you see. We go school. We walk to school, those days. But when we deliver milk, we ride our horse, or mule, jackass, like that. You put milk cans. Hanging on to the milk cans. Well, not too much milk--maybe 15, 20 gallons of milk, every morning, and deliver.

WN: What time did you wake up in the morning?

WT: Five o'clock every morning or the old man come over there, kick you out of bed, you know, just when you want to sleep more. (Chuckles)

WN: How far away was the school from where you lived?

WT: Just about a mile. The sanitorium up on the hill, and the school right below, you see. Well, I had to deliver milk and go school. Pretty near every morning, late, too. (Laughs) Well, when you think about it now, those days, we thought. . . . You know, you don't think about it. That's your regular chores you have to do. You have to do that kind of work where you get up, and get the cows in, and go milk the cows, and go. . . . Well, there was three of us there--my older brother and my cousin used to work with us.

WN: What other chores did you have besides milking the cows and delivering the milk?

WT: Well, that's in the morning, that's before school, you see. After school, you come home, we have to go and plow the field up. We plow, plant corn, or plant whatever. Busy all the time. No time to play or loaf. We go down. We had milking cows. They were about half mile from the house, down. Maybe not quite a half mile, but quite a ways down, where they go out, daytime, in the pasture. Mostly all cactus down in that place. Then, in the evening, bring 'em home right in the little paddock right next to the milking pen. Then, in the morning, we get up, well, the cows right there, so milk. Never had those barns like today. You milk the cow; you have to feed the calf, too. You take half of the milk, and half go to the calf. Then, the cow goes out, feed all day. And next morning, well, she comes back, feed the calf and you take the milk.

Then, down in that lower land, where I said where there's cactus, we raise pigs down there. They live on cactus. And we have corn. Once a day, you feed 'em corn, too.

We had chickens. Of course, chickens, we had a chicken coop, where you keep the chickens in. Some run loose, but most of 'em all penned up. My sisters and all, they handled the chicken part. We boys would get out in the field. Of course, we were kind of big. The other kids, they were small.

WN: How come you folks were kind of big?

WT: Well, we're older, eh? You know what I mean. We're older than the other. . . . Those days, the poor family, they have lot of kids. There were some rich people around. They don't have any kids or maybe one or two kids, that's all they have around the place. They never go to the school we go. They go to Mainland. They don't mingle with us guys, you know. We had mostly all Chinese people. Around where we lived, that's all Chinese farmers.

WN: Were you folks considered pretty well-off farmers in Kula compared to the others?

WT: No, we all about the same. Well, that's how you make your living--on farming, eh? There was nothing else. Well, of course, some people, they work for the ranches and all that. Like we kids, when we got little bit older, spare time, we train horses for other people. We have our own horses, but when we want to go. . . .

Well, Sunday, we get a day off Sunday. After all the work in the morning, then we. . . . Well, my mother, she send us to church every Sunday. We got to go church. (Chuckles) Had two churches right up on the hill, where we lived. There's a Catholic church and a Mormon church. So, we kind of leaned on the Mormon side, but they don't have church all the time. When they don't have church, we go to Catholic church. Just so we're in church about one hour or so. And then you can go out and play or whatever you want to do. But we still had to do our milking in the morning, Sunday or. . . . Every day, milk. Holiday, no, no such thing as no milk the cows, you know. But lot of people think, "Well, gosh, the guy had a easy life." That's no easy life--hard life. But we never minded.

WN: You know, the things that you folks grew, and the chickens, and the pigs and so forth, did you folks sell those things?

WT: Yeah. Well, we use a lot for the house use. We had people come up and buy eggs and all that. You sell 'em, and they'd take 'em out this. . . . What do you call 'em? Like, around here, you have a packing place where they pack up. You take your produce to. . . . Well, we take 'em to the store. The store, they buy it from us. Trade 'em with food or whatever. Meat, we never buy meat. We always had our own meat. We eat salt meat and pork. Then, vegetables, we had all our vegetables. We plant our own. We buy rice, and sugar, and stuff like that. That's the main things.

Fish, we were far away from the beach. We only get fish when the fishermen, they come up trade with us. We give 'em some meat or they trade with vegetables. Some might bring us fish, and we give 'em something else. But very little money involved in that. We didn't have much money to spend, anyway. (Chuckles) That was the hard times.

So, the people, when you want somebody to help you, they never asked you, "How much you going pay me?" or anything like that. They just come work. If you think they worth dollar a day, well, that's all they're going to get, you see?

WN: So, you folks did hire people to work on the ranch?

WT: Well, once in a while, my dad, he. . . . Sometimes, there's little too much work around, when we planting corn and all that. We either hire 'em or we trade time. The farmers, they come help, and we go help when they need help.

Then, you have to depend on the weather, too. Sometimes, we get a good year. You plant your corn around about February and March. You get a good year, well, you get a good crop. If you don't get rain, why, once in a while, we get in a drought, no more rain. Those days, we never had no pipeline--no water from the government. That's all rainwater. You got to depend on rain. You go to Kula, I guess, up till today, you'll find people, they still use their own cisterns. You know, the cisterns? Today, we have tanks and all that. Those days, they dig a hole in the ground, plaster it up, cement wall up. Some people had pump. We never had no pump. We'd take a bucket with rope on, throw it down, pull the water up, and fill it up. Until long after that, when we got to be pretty old. Dad made a little money, well, we got one of those hand pumps. We pump water. Then, the county come in with a water line. They brought water from way up in Olinda. Pipeline. But we have to buy water then.

WN: Were you there when that happened?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah. So, well then, that's a little better. When they got water, more people, they raised more animals, and they get little better standard of living. Of course, around where we were, there was no such thing as patent toilets and all that. You have a outside privy, eh? So, that was altogether different from today. Everybody worked. There's no such thing as get up late and sleep late. You get up early and go to work. The kids and all go do something. Everybody had something to do.

No such thing as go light a fire [match] and you turn a switch on. All wood stoves, everybody. If you have a wood. . . . Many people don't even have a wood stove. They cook outside, open fire. Yeah, that was a tough life.

WN: You know, the Chinese farmers around there? Were their farms smaller than, say, your father's?

WT: About the same. When a new guy comes in, he works for somebody else. First thing you know, he lease some land. Because the Chinese, most of them, they never owned their own land. They leased land. And maybe five acres farm. Ten acres, well, if they

have big family, they have a bigger farm. No hire outside help. The family work. Well, the menfolks, when they get up little bit, some of 'em have little stores or something like that. The Chinese, the father, they lazy. They no work too much, you know. They do the cooking. Every chance they get, they gambling. Nighttime, they gamble. Daytime, they sleep. (Chuckles) The mother and the girls work. The Chinese girls, they work as hard as a man. As things got a little better as the years went by, then they went out for better education.

WN: Your mother was part-Chinese, huh?

WT: Yeah.

WN: Is she from Kula?

WT: Yeah, yeah. She's from there, you see. Of course, my father, he came from Honolulu. In fact, they were from here first. My grandfather was from here.

WN: From Kona?

WT: From wherever he came from--Germany or. . . . He was in Kona. Then from Kona, they went to Maui. My dad, I think he was born here. Then, they settled in Honolulu and Maui. My father, like anybody else, when you're young, you travel and you find a place you'd like to settle, well, you stay. That's how I got here. I thought I'd go out and get a job here. Well, you stay here, raise a family, and you don't want to move after you get a family. What you going do? (Chuckles) Settle here.

WN: How was life growing up on a ranch?

WT: That's all we know. To me, that was the best life to live. I didn't want to live in no city. Weekends. . . . When we got older, we can drive a car. Those days, everything on a horse. By and by, when we got a little better, my dad made a little money, he bought a car for us. At first--we were all kids--we didn't know how to drive a car. Maybe once a month, you see a car going by. Then, he bought a--I'll never forget that--he bought this Overland. Willy's Overland, eh? First car I learned to drive. Then, after a while, he got one of those Model-T. We put a box in the back, you know, made a little truck out of this Model-T. And I drove that. Well, I tell you, first thing, the way I really learn, I hit the gate. Went right through the gate. (Laughs) After that, you learn. You got to make mistakes, that's when you learn.

WN: How old were you when you were learning?

WT: Well, 13 years old, 12 years old. Do you know how to drive a Model-T? No, I don't think so. Well, the Model-T, they had three pedals there. Your clutch, eh? Well, the clutch, that's the low

gear on there. You press it way in, it's low gear. And you let it go, that's high gear. You press it way in . . .

WN: Just the clutch?

WT: Yeah, the clutch. You press 'em way in, she's going, see? You go halfway, that's neutral. It's all in footwork, you see?

WN: No stick at all?

WT: No, no more stick. All these three pedals there. The middle one, you press 'em in halfway, that's the clutch. Your foot is on there. The middle one, you press on that one, right down, and that reverse. You got to use two feet. One guy, one foot, you can't drive that one. (Chuckles) So, then, the right-hand side [pedal] is the brake. You step on the brake and put your clutch halfway, well, you're in neutral, eh? And if you let that go, well, you're in high gear. First time I drove the darn thing--we had a guy teaching us how to drive. "Now, you can drive. Go ahead, drive." I go down by the gate. I want to stop, I put the clutch, press 'em way in, and I keep on going, hit the gate. You don't know when to stop. If I slack up, I would [have] stopped, you see?

WN: What does the middle pedal do?

WT: That's the reverse. But you have to put 'em neutral to reverse, see?

WN: You have to put the clutch in neutral . . .

WT: Halfway, yeah.

WN: And then, press . . .

WT: Press that middle one way in.

WN: All the way down?

WT: All the way down. Then, she back up.

WN: What about the gas pedal?

WT: Well, you get on the hand.

WN: Oh, hand?

WT: Yeah. Get the lever, there. You see how these lawn mowers work? That's how. Pull that.

WN: And was two gears? Low and . . .

WT: Low and high.

WN: Low and high. No in-between?

WT: No more. In-between, the reverse.

(Laughter)

WN: How did you start the car?

WT: Cranker. You put 'em in neutral, you see. Well, there's a hand lever--hand brake, you know. Get a hand brake. You put that one halfway, that's neutral. You pull 'em way back, well, that's stop. You let that go. When you going, well, most time, you letting go, you see? Many times, your foot brake no work, then you grab that lever and pull 'em up.

(Laughter)

WT: [If] too slow, by that time, you go through the garage or the wall. Many people go right through their wall. There're not many cars around to learn how to drive. You own one car; you get a friend, "Hey, let me drive that car." They want to learn, well, they come there.

WN: Did other farmers in the area have Model-Ts?

WT: Oh, everybody start with Model-Ts. Then, by and by, long after the Model-Ts, then they had this. . . . Then, the first trucks come out. They had one-ton trucks. Maybe three-quarters, then one-ton flat bed. They had Maxwell and, oh, some other. Well, the Chevrolet came up after. Chevrolet, I think, get only two cylinders, those buggas. And they had Buick and all that, you see? Well, the rich people had Cadillacs and all that, but those Cadillacs, all single cylinder, you know. Brass, copper. When one bearing burn out, well, just [to] take that one part, you got to take the whole engine off, you see.

WN: Had rich people in Kula that had Cadillacs at that time?

WT: Oh, yeah. That Rice, Cameron, Baldwins. All the Baldwins. But, like us, way up in the country, we don't see them. You hear about 'em, that's all. Well, they stuck by themselves. They own all the plantations and all that. In those days, they never have no local people be lunas and all that. They bring these Germans, Scotchmen come. They run the plantation.

Chinamen, they were slaves. The poor guys, they come down, they work like hell for maybe 50 cents a day. As soon as their time is up--they go contract over there--they run away from the plantation. The Chinamen, they run out and farm, or they start build a little store, go around peddle the stuff. Those old-timers, they work hard. They never get anything easy. But the main thing with the Orientals, they educated their kids. All what they made went for

education.

Those days, over in Maui, they had a Maui High, but only haoles go there. The Chinese, most of 'em went to St. Louis College. Because Hawaiians, they had this Lahaina Luna on Maui. Then, the girls, they had that Mauna Olu Seminary. My sisters went there. And my brothers. . . . But I never had a chance to go the school. I had to work. See, my mother died when we were young. So, everybody worked.

WN: You went up to eighth grade, you said?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WN: How did you feel when you folks got the car for the first time?

WT: Well, everybody wanted to drive 'em. But my dad, he said, no, no. We had a guy there. I know his name was Frank Enos. He was half-Portuguese. Those guys, they work for nothing just because they can drive a car. They come there, work for food, that's all. Those days, there was no such thing as liquor like today. You know, all this kind of beer and all that. Today's guy can't work unless he have one can of beer in his hand, eh? (Chuckles) Those days, if you want to drink, you make your own corn whiskey or swipe. You know, sour mashed potatoes, something like that. This cactus, they make liquor out of that.

WN: What's swipe?

WT: That's what they call the sour. . . . They mash up. Some of 'em make it out of rice or sour potato, like that. Put 'em in a barrel and ferment, and drink that. But I seen all of 'em. I never drink all my life, you know. Up till now, I never drink. I never smoke; I never drink. I seen too many drunks, you know. (Laughs) I won't make a damn fool out of myself.

WN: You said some Chinese started stores. Were there a lot of Chinese stores in Kula?

WT: Yeah. All lower Chinese. You know, little stores, sell a little groceries and stuff like that. Can goods. Mostly all cans. Kula, you see, there were two kind of class of Chinese. There was one society house, and they had a Chinese school. Lower side, right on the main highway. Then, I think, the little better--maybe more upper-class people--they go up in the hills. Way up in--they call that Chinatown. Something like you have over here--Hongwanji and all that, you know. They have two divisions. I guess, like anything else, they have different denomination of churches.

So, the Chinatown, very seldom we get up there, but every time we get there, well, we have to go up Chinatown. That's big deal if you get up Chinatown. That's where they gamble and everything else

up there. Gamble, and those days, they had the opium come in, too. The Koreans came in there. These Koreans were opium fiends, you know.

But if you go to Honolulu, even today, you ask 'em, the old-timers, where they come from, they say, "Kula, Kula, Kula." I know a lot of business people in Honolulu, they come from Kula. Contractors and all that, today. Because the kids went to school. They were lawmakers and all that. One time, if you have Chinese blood, you run for office, you guarantee you'll get in. There was no Japanese representatives, or senators, or all that. But Chinese, they have plenty. You know, had the haoles, and Chinese, and Portuguese. Hawaiians, not too many, but half-breeds, they had quite a few. Then, after a while, when the Japanese boys got more education, then they start to get in politics. So, after a while, they took over.

WN: You were telling me, too, that you got a job working for the telephone company in Kula?

WT: Well, I just work there about two months, that's all.

WN: What did you do?

WT: Just drive a truck. Linemen. . . . I just haul the guys. In the morning, take the men to work and all that. Yeah, maybe three months, I worked. Because, one month, we had kind of a contract. Couple of us--of course, we'll be working, per diem workers--but they give us a job laying a cable from Kahului to Wailuku--put a cable underground. They would let out a sort of a contract. You dig so many feet a day, or like that. With our spare time, me and my cousin, we go down there. They had some people. You go so many feet. Damn hard thing. Look like easy. Sand on top, but under, the damn thing is solid, you know. Sand like clay. I forget now what they pay, but at least, we make about two and a half [\$2.50], three dollars a day, we contract there, you see? After the day's work, after one week, the guy come measure so much, then he pays us off. But the regular hours, I was driving a truck. And that was considered good job, because I was driving truck, the other guys climbing pole and all that. I just take the materials. But I didn't last too long. From there, then I went to Honolulu. I rather be on a horse.

WN: So, that was like a short side job that you had in the telephone company. You said, also, in Maui, you trained horses?

WT: Yeah, when we were kids, we trained, while working on the ranch. Our own horse, then other. . . . There was another ranch right next to us--Kamaole Ranch. They had horses, but nobody train 'em. And myself, my cousin--three of us--and another friend, we go and contract with the guy. Well, we take couple of horses and stick 'em out up at our place. Horse, we get five dollars a head, and

the mules, ten bucks. (Chuckles) Mules were harder to train.

WN: How long do you keep the horse?

WT: Well, we can train 'em in maybe couple of months, but we keep 'em longer; sometimes people say, "We want a work horse," eh? Some horses, we train 'em, maybe about a month, we can get a horse out. You don't train 'em all day. Just maybe half an hour, one hour a day, like that, you go ride around. After you get 'em working, we use those same horses for working. Same time, you doing your work and training 'em, eh? Then, we didn't have too many horses of our own, because we use those horses for plow and all that--our own horse. When we go driving some cows that we had--we didn't have too much cattle, but we had to go to paddocks all over. And he had some land way down Makena, and all the way. Then, you have to go down there, and after they weaned from their mothers, then they go down there in the pasture, and we turn 'em loose. Those days, was cactus, mostly cactus, no water. They live on cactus.

So, we trained these horses. When we get spare time, we want to go up to mountain, hunt, and go up Haleakala. Go up the crater, take friends up, people like that. You can't take your work horse up there, so we get this half-broken horses and go up. Well, today, they say, take tourists around. Those days, we used to do that when this people come from away, they want to get up the mountain. How you're going to. . . . There's no such thing as road at all. You had the trail to go up from by the Kula Sanitorium, you know, the trail up--the mountain trail. So, you ride up, that's half-day ride, all day. Camp on the mountain.

WN: You would actually take people--visitors--to Kula, up there?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We were only kids, but I said, when we have spare time, weekends like that, we tell our dad, "We going go out there, so get somebody else to take care our work there." Got to spend two days, Saturday and Sunday, maybe. Then, we make \$10, take 'em up. (Chuckles)

WN: That was what you charged?

WT: Well, they give us around what they. . . . That was kind of standard thing. Every dollar . . .

WN: You'd actually be using the other people's horses, then?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, that's the idea. We train 'em; we use those horses. But we don't abuse 'em. You can't use our own horses. They have to plow the fields and do the work down there [on the farm]. When you get this kind of outside, while you training them, they go up one, two trips up the crater, they tame, I tell you. Those days, mostly mustangs. They hard to train, eh?

WN: How do you train a horse?

WT: First, you catch 'em, tie 'em up, put a halter on 'em. We all try to treat 'em gently. Make the horse understand that you're not going to hurt 'em, eh? Because there's all different methods. Some of them, they beat 'em up to train 'em, but you can't train a horse that way. The horse get frightened and scared. They want to get away from you. You see, we have plenty grain, so we feed our horses corn--cracked corn. With cracked corn, we feed 'em a little bit. They get to come to you. You pet 'em, brush 'em down, and all that. They get tame.

Of course, there's all different methods. Some guys down there were rough on the horse. They never tame 'em. We tame a horse so that kids can ride 'em, women can ride 'em. If you rough, women [will] never ride that horse. So, I carry that same method today. I tame horses. After I get through with 'em, anybody can ride 'em. Kids and everybody. There was all kinds of ways. Some of them, like mules, you got to show the mule you was master. They ornery buggers, you know. But if you kind to 'em, show 'em that you the master, they get gentle.

And up there, where we live, was all rocks down there. Something like this place here, rocky. Then, you have to shoe them. You got to put shoes on 'em. But those horses, if you go rough with 'em, you can't slap shoes on. They'll kick you, or they jump away, or they fight. But you be kind to 'em, gentle, brush 'em down, and all that, then you pick their leg up. Maybe take you three or four days before you can get 'em to know that they not going to get hurt. They let you do what you want.

WN: So, the five dollars they paid for horse, that includes. . . .
I mean, you folks would feed them and everything, too?

WT: Well, yeah. we feed 'em. We take care of 'em. But actually, there was other people around there probably charging \$15. I don't think more than \$15. But that's all they do. They just handle the horse in maybe couple of weeks. But we don't care. We take every good horse. We want to keep 'em. Some horses, easy keeping; some, they get skinny quick. If we see a good animal, we try to keep 'em a long time. If the owner comes, "Not ready for you. Not ready." We (chuckles) keep 'em long time. One batch go out, bring another bunch in.

WN: Was that profitable for you folks?

WT: Sure. Because we have the use of the animal. That was the main thing--not the money so much, but we have the use of the animal.

WN: The people who gave you folks the horse [to train], did they know that you folks were using it?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, we train 'em for these ranches. There was a ranch right below our place. They had plenty horses. Usually, they have more horses than cattle. Then, after the horse is real tame, then they go out and take 'em to the plantation. They sell 'em, eh? They probably sell [for] maybe a hundred dollars. If they can get \$150, that's good money. But around \$50 was about the regular price for a horse.

WN: Did prices vary according to the breed of the horse?

WT: No, that's not so much the breed. People want a gentle horse. And the horse can work, you know what I mean? We go out and teach 'em. The cowboy horse, well, you want to work cow. So, you make a good horse, then the owner is proud of riding a good horse, get a horse that can work, eh? You get some of these guys, if they abuse the horse, they get 'em tame quick. Couple of weeks, the horse tame. That darn horse, he may be skinny now, he's all right. Then, you let 'em go, he gets fat, he'll buck you off. He turn one way, he lower the head, he turn the other way. I don't believe in that. My cousin and I, we were about the best horse trainers around there. We were young, but we had little bit more sense than some of these guys. They just beat the horse and run their tail off just to get 'em tame and get their money, eh? But, actually, we wanted a work horse. That's what we wanted.

WN: And then, in 1920, you said, you went to Honolulu, eh? Why did you go to Honolulu?

WT: There was a ad in the paper there. They had the Oahu Polo Club, owned by Dillinghams--I guess the hui whatever. They wanted some boys and some men to come there, train horses, and take these horses to the Mainland. They were going to have this big polo game, I guess, up there. Well, that's a big thing among the rich people before. You know, all the Baldwins, Rices, and Spaldings, and all those people.

Well, the only people they had down there working with 'em, they had this colored boys, Puerto Ricans, and something like that. Not too many people want that kind of job around there. Then, a friend of mine, he knows this Dillinghams and whoever the manager running the stable. He come to me and he says, "Say, you want to go to Mainland?"

I said, "Well, I don't mind." Gosh, when you say going to the Mainland, why, that's something--no poor kid can go up there, you know. Those days, no plane, you have to go on a boat. So, I said, "Well, I don't know. I don't have money to go to Mainland."

He said, "Well, no. There's a job down Honolulu. You go down there, work for maybe two months. And around about two months' time--two, three months--they're going to take this team up. They have to take their own horses, see? If you go down there and learn

what they want, you can go, because they can't these colored boys up there." Those days, they have segregation, eh?

I said, "Sure." I was with the telephone company. I quit them, and I went Honolulu. I got down there, they put me. . . . And I got along fine with the boys that working there. Oh, they had plenty of horses there. They had Parker Ranch horses and the army, they had horses there. Those days, everything was horses. They gave me this certain string of horses to handle. That's my job. I feed 'em, and I brush 'em down, and I take care of that. So, I was out in the field. Every morning, we go out and exercise 'em. Ride 'em around.

WN: This is out Mokuleia?

WT: No, no, no. Those days, no such thing. They're down at Kapiolani Park. Right up in the kiawe, that's where the stables were. And we ride on that field there. Before, that's not the small kind polo field like today. The whole park there was the polo field. Right down where the zoo and all through there. Big. Well, they had a one mile track there. We ride around there. We had one corner there where we had sand in there. We take the horse in there, exercise 'em. Then, the trainer, he's in one corner, and he tell you what to do. You just walk the horse, and you probably trot 'em, then gallop 'em. And you going around one way in the ring, then he says, "The other way," then you try turn 'em, get the horse. Because, you know, when you're playing--polo horse got to be fast, follow the ball, eh? So, that was part of our job.

There was three of us riding. The rest of the guys all stable boys and all that kind of stuff. One, he was from the army. When I got there, then they gave me all the army horses. And this boy, when we come in, he go cool the horses off and brush 'em down. They have a sandpile. They take the horses, roll in the sand, and they go wash 'em down, brush 'em down. You know, that kind of stable work. I learned quite a lot there, too. About different methods. We have a different method training cowboy horses. You go there, now, for polo, going to be altogether different, eh?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: What are some of the basic differences between training a cowboy horse and, say, a polo horse?

WT: Well, cowboy horse, you get on 'em, and you go out. You just go right out. Cowboy horse, you want to go straight. You know, learn 'em to go straight. Well, you turn and get around like that. But with the polo horse, you have to turn in a circle right away. And

then, maybe halfway this way, and the ball going the other way, you swing 'em around again the other way. With cows [horses], altogether different. You teach them how to follow a cow, and their mind is on that cow. The cow turn, they turn. They go here, see? It's very seldom you make a sharp circle and turn around.

Then, they don't have to--just from a standstill--and jump. Like a polo horse, they're always on the run. You don't walk. Polo horses are running, galloping all the time. With a cowboy horse, you let 'em walk. When sometime you have to run, you just make your motion of forward, and they go, eh? With a polo horse, the ball coming this way, well, you see that ball and all of a sudden that ball ricochet and go the other way, that horse have to be there and block the other guy up. Well, that's the difference. They got to be quick. And the horse, you got to see that they don't buck, too. Well, that was the trouble. They had this Parker Ranch unbroken horses--halter broken--then they send 'em down. And then, you have to finish 'em up down there. You feed the horses a lot of grain and all that stuff, by god, they high-strung. They half thoroughbred Morgan horses. They strong, and you got to be pretty good rider.

WN: The Dillinghams, they got their horses only from Parker Ranch?

WT: From Mainland, too. They went more in thoroughbred and Morgan. That way, it give 'em that fighting spirit. A cowboy horse can be a mustang. He can be better than lot of the good breed horses. Well, that's the old method. Today, they say, well, they get polo horses. . . . These damn horses today. They take one cowboy horse, go down, and do just as good. Yeah, small place, too. Small.

WN: You mean, up Mokuleia, now?

WT: Well, yeah. Over there or wherever they have. The polo fields are only about one-fourth of the area where they play.

WN: Today?

WT: Yeah. I think they only use maybe three horses. Before, each polo player, he's got at least five horses out there, ready. Like each guy, the owner--the rider--the polo player, he's got his man trained there. His horse is all saddled already. When he come, that horse not responding right, he ride back. He give you the signal. You right there with that horse--ready, saddled up, and everything. Out he goes. Bring this horse in. Well, you go out, if the horse need to rest, it's up to you. Rub 'em down, something like that. Then, the next horse. They have five horses all ready all the time. Three minutes, they ride 'em, maybe. Only three minutes, some of 'em. Out they go. The next horse come in. You got to be there. Those guys, they bet money, you know. That's not this kind ten-cents game. Big money, they. . . . So, we got a good trainer, good horseman, he takes good care of the horse. The guy makes some

money, you get a good bonus. Sometimes, they give you a tip, there's more than what you worked in a whole month.

WN: Oh, yeah? How much you got paid--your regular wages?

WT: Regular wages, maybe \$50, \$60, \$75 at the most.

WN: Per month?

WT: Yeah. But they feed you, too. Give you house and everything.

WN: Where did you live?

WT: They had a nice cottage in the back of the stable.

WN: Kapiolani Park?

WT: Yeah, way in the back, up in the kiawe trees. Well, I don't know now. Everything different, eh? Then, you got a day off, too. Well, you work daytime. In the morning, you get up early in the morning and feed the horse and do that. And go out exercise the horses. They tell you when to go--seven days. If rain, no go out, you know. Stay in there, clean around the place. Air out the saddles. They get their special saddles for each horse. You clean 'em all up. They want to be all shiny, you know. After they go ride those horses, come back, that saddle all sweat, eh? From the horse. Then, you have to dry 'em up. So, there was plenty of work.

The week we were supposed to go the Mainland, the damn stable burned down up in the Mainland. When the stable burned, the boss came. He was going up. It was sad thing, you know. When the stable burned, the horses all were burned; some killed. So, no polo game. Then, the boss told me he's going to the Mainland. He said, "You stick around here. When I come back from the Mainland, I'm going send you down the ranch." This Mokuleia side. Down there, Dillingham Ranch, all cattle and horses. But that's what I wanted. I want to get down to the ranch where, you know, go out and more action. We have a telephone right in the stable there and in the boss's headquarters there. He get a telephone there all connected, you see? So, one day, the telephone rang. I went over there, and I was going to answer while he was talking on there. The ranch manager from down at Mokuleia, he say, "When you going send the boy down?"

He said, "Well, I changed my mind. I'm afraid if I send 'em down there, he might quit. I want him up here. We have enough work for him up here. I'll send the other boy, but this one, we keep 'em."

Oh, I was sick when I heard that. I said, well, I not going stick around this stable here just brushing horses. I'm not brought up that way. Anyway, I stuck around a little bit. Then, the boss--my

boss, he was nice guy. I liked the old guy.

WN: Dillingham?

WT: Not Dillingham. I don't even know what Dillingham look like until the day they come practice like that. The trainer, the manager, or whatever you want to call the boss that take care all this. We had about half a dozen of us boys working there. So, one day, I told 'em, "By gosh, when you going send me down the ranch?"

He said, "Well, I don't think it's good for you. It's kind of rough down there, and all that."

But we got along fine. Hell, you go work for a guy, if he tell you sit on the wall there all day, [you] sit there. That's what I thought. I'm not going to answer him back and tell him, "I don't want that." I was that kind of guy. I just do what they tell me. Then, he had all these other guys. He has couple of darky boys there, and had these Puerto Ricans, so they working, those guys there. He tell 'em one thing, they just do the opposite. They were kind of little hard on the horses. When he not around, oh, they whack 'em on the head or something like that. Then, he want to keep me there anyway. I said, "No, no. If you don't send me down the ranch, I go to work for some ranch there." He went away. That's right. He went up to the Mainland, after everything all cleared up, he went.

Then, one morning, I made up my mind. I said, "I think I want to go." So, I wrote a letter to this [Samuel] Dowsett. I told him where I was working and all that. I wanted to get out more out in the open. I thought if he take me up here in Kona, I come up here and see if he had a job for me, maybe I work for him. If I like the place, I work. If I no like, well then, I go back Maui or somewhere. So, by gosh, I got a reply from him. He said, "I'll be down there on a certain day." Just a few day's after, he come down. He said, "Yeah, I'll be glad to take you up there." But he said, "You're going to quit here?"

I said, "Well, if you take me, then I go see the boss. I don't want to just walk off." So, I said, "I go down the office."

"Well, you do that. You can go up with me if you want to work up there, all right." But he said, "Kona not like here. Over there, rain all the time."

I said, "I don't care. I rather be outside."

So, that's how. I went down. I made up my mind. I went down. I met Dillingham down there and I told him. I said, "Well, I tell you. I want to get out little bit, see what the other part of the world look like." I said, "If I make up my mind I want to come back, will you give me a job here?"

"Anytime. You go out, and if you not satisfied, you come back here. We make room for you."

But I came here. I tell you, the first couple of weeks, I was ready to go somewhere. It rained, rained, rained every day.

WN: You mean, Kona?

WT: Yeah. Where we were, over there. The other side is about three miles from here, four miles. And up in the hill, oh, it rained. And I was waiting for the boss to come back. The boys down here, they told me, way up wherever we supposed to go work, it only rains in the night. Daytime is nice. That's where 6,000 feet elevation. Get out there, you ride, go out. I said, "Where's all the horses? They told me I was going to. . . . I came here to train horse."

He said, "Oh, they're all up in the mountain."

But I never had a chance to go up there. I was down here for about one month before the boss come up. Then, we went up the mountain. Well, I was up there. It was cold like a son of a gun. (Chuckles) And they had these damn old shacks, you know, [made with] the damn 1 by 12 [foot boards]. They have crack in, and the wind blowing.

WN: Where was the ranch?

WT: Up here, McCandless Ranch.

WN: Kealia?

WT: Kealia ma uka, yeah. You know that place, Kealia, eh? Our first headquarter was up one mile off the [main] road. Not on the road, up. And that damn place rained. Rained, rained, rained all the time. Down the road is clear, but up there rain. And it just rain in the middle part, the rainy belt. We got up on the mountain, well, was nice. Cold in the morning; the afternoon was warm. So, I worked there. That's from '21 till . . .

WN: So, you stayed in Honolulu only for about six months, yeah?

WT: Yeah, about that. I didn't try . . .

WN: Working for Dillingham, yeah? And so, then, you said, you wrote a letter to Dowsett, who was in Kona, who was partners with McCandless?

WT: That's right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

WN: How did you know of Dowsett?

WT: Well, he used to be on Maui. He and my dad were good friends. His sister had a ranch--that Ulupalakua ranch on Maui. They used to

own that--that Raymond Ranch. Well, that's how. We were kids and we used to see him over there. We thought he was a great guy, a manager of a ranch and all that. He knew me as a kid, eh? So, that's how I got here. I worked there from '21 right up to the end of the year. In 1922--I'll never forget that--February 22. That was the Washington's Birthday. Those days, they used to observe those days. You know, any holiday . . .

WN: Used to celebrate right on the day, eh? Not Monday?

WT: Yeah, yeah. Not any other, just that day. So, the boss come up from Honolulu, Dowsett, this Dr. Judd, I think. Well, they come up. And this guy, oh, every three or four months, this Judd, he comes up. They were rich guys. He come up, and he goes around the forest, go around different places. He was making a study of all the Hawaiian trees, the wood, wherever they have 'em. Then, he takes pieces home.

Well, when they come, they said, "Say, on February 22, they going to have this big rodeo in Honolulu." Those days, rodeos, mostly, you have the trick horses, and they bring a bunch of those humpbacked cattle--Brahma--and bucking horses from the Mainland. They come down, and they put up a price. They had that Fernandez show--well, carnival, that's what you call 'em. They have a merry-go-round and all that thing. They had 'em down Aala Park. That time, they had a little park there, then the St. Louis School right next, way around the river. I don't know what there's now, but those days, you know, way back.

So, they said they going to have this rodeo, and anybody who can ride those horses would get \$300 prize. The boss said, "Any of you boys"--was half a dozen of us--"Any of you boys want to go down, the ranch pay all your expense go down." Send you down, all that.

Well, right off, I said, "I go down." I been training already up here, riding all that bucking horse and everything.

"Any other boys want to go?" Nobody want to go.

I said, "I go." So, I went down. I stayed Dowsett's place down there. His sister-in-law was taking care of the place. They had the chauffeur. They have a Model-T Ford down there.

He said, "Well, you go down." He [Dowsett] already wrote a letter down and told 'em to take care of me down there. And this guy, that Dr. Judd, he was supposed to be my manager. We went down on the same boat together. We got down there, he took me to the house where I was supposed to stay. And he just left me. I never see sight of him no more. He never come down to be my manager or anything.

So, I didn't ride daytime--nighttime. That's when you get the

crowd. I got down there. I watched the first night. I watched them ride. Not one of 'em stayed on this horse. Nobody stayed. They had one Indian guy. I'll never forget him. His name was Grady Smith. He was supposed to be the champ. Well, he come down and he ride a horse. One of the horses, I guess, he used to ride. The horse, he just buck. Straight bucking. Oh, what a champion! Then, they had a girl there. She rides one little pony there. She ride the horse--a few jumps. Well, that's great thing.

Then, these Parker Ranch cowboys. All the ranches, all the big ranches from Maui and all over [were] all down there. And not one of 'em stayed on. Not one. No Hawaiian could stay on. They had some boys from the--Honolulu--from the cavalry, I think. They went down there. And they had one little nigger guy. He was pretty good. He stayed on quite a while. Threw 'em off, that damn horse.

You see, they had about five of those--six, maybe, horses there. The damn big horses. Not this little kind of small--big plow horses. You can see they been in harness. Hair marks, scars all over. The damn horse, you put a saddle on, daytime, you ride around. They ride 'em, you know. I know, there were two of 'em, I seen, they ride 'em right in the parade and all that. But when they want [the horse] to buck, they just put that strap right up his flank there. And the guy there, those days, they had this high life [spelling uncertain], see? It's something like that stuff--the fire extinguisher? What do you call 'em--2 0?

WN: H₂O?

WT: You know, that stuff. That damn stuff they call CO₂. I think, something like that. He get one of those little rubber syringes. That bugga, they squirt 'em around. Then, they let 'em go. That son of a gun, I don't care [if it's] one old plug, he going to buck, you know. But they were trained.

These guys, that's all they do. They go around, take this. Have a carnival, and they move around. Well, they thought they'd come Hawaii. So, they had all that going around.

Anyway, when it came to my night, I went there and I went register, see? They look at me and, "You cowboy?"

I said, "Well, I ride a little bit." I never go there with the way they dress with all chaps and every damn thing, you know.

WN: What you had?

WT: I just had a khaki pants, khaki shirt on. Well, I had a kind of cheap cowboy hat. (Chuckles) Five-dollar hat, three-dollar hat or something. Then, put a red neckerchief on. Those 20-cents kind neckerchief. Then, I go in there. The guy look at me, "Well, we try you out." So, he said, "You get here a certain time the next

night." All right, the driver, he takes me home.

I had my own saddle. I went down with my saddle. I said, "I'm not going to go down there. . . . I don't know what the hell." You know, you get your own saddle, the stirrup fit you right. So, I go down. The guys, they come over there. I said, "No, I'm going to ride my saddle. Either my saddle or no ride."

Then, this guy, Eben Low. I think you might have heard about him.

WN: Who's this?

WT: Eben Low, that's his name. He was a old-time cowboy from Montana or somewhere. Well, he come here. He was working on Maui. He and this Dowsett, they got together, and they used to work at Ulupalakua. And the guy, his arm, it got shot off with a shotgun. I remember that. Not too far from our house that he got shot. Let's see, no, that was McPhee. No, Eben Low, he got tangled with a rope. And they had to cut his hand off. Well, he was one of the judges. When he heard the name, he said, "Well, you Charlie's son?"

I said, "Yeah."

Then, he talked to me in Hawaiian. All these guys around, he talked in Hawaiian. He told me, "You get on there, and you just stay on 'em, now." He said, "You squeeze your knees up, get 'em all up tight, you know. These damn horses buck. They not like our kind of Hawaiian horses here. These buggas, they buck," he said. You know, big son of a gun, wide horses, eh? These were big plow horses. Well, he gave me a little encouragement, you see.

I said okay. So, get over there. Those days, not chute. They snub 'em right on the. . . . They had another big, black horse. And this damn guy that supposed to come from the Mainland--that Indian guy there--well, he snubbed the horses on. See, they get a loop. They put 'em on your pommel. You know what's a pommel, eh? The horn on the saddle. There's that loop; they put 'em there. Then, they take this end of the rope over the neck, eh? He take couple of twists on there. Well, you saddle the horse. I put mine. He said, "We have a saddle over there."

I said, "No, no. I ride my own saddle."

They go there. You see, the guys, if they saddle the horse, they going put the saddle way behind, eh? You see, the horse back, eh? All right, now, if there's the horse's head there, you put the saddle over here, that's where you catch all that [i.e., the force of the buck]. You going sit here, eh? You right where the hump there. Well, that horse going to fly you off either backwards or frontwards. But [if] you saddle 'em right up on his withers, almost on the neck--way up there--well, the kick is all behind [you]. Not much, over there, the front end. He might come up this

and down. I been through all that, you see. And I was only young guy, yet, but I been through the mill. So, I saddled my horse while this guy hanging on.

Meantime, this guy, he's got his spurs on that horse's neck. He ride in there, and he jab in the neck. So, this horse sitting down. Everything ready. Then, I get the saddle tightened. I jump on the horse. You get on the horse. You not allowed touch the saddle. You get on there, you take your hat off. There's a rope, just a rope around the neck there. No bridle, not even a halter to hold his head. The head is free. If you have a halter or something like that, more or less, you know which way the head going, eh? [But] this is all free, you see? Well, you don't know whether he going this way, that way, or go straight ahead.

I watched the night before. I was watching everything. I never say nothing. I just stopped and watched. But that guy, he dig that spur in the horses's neck. That horse, he hurt. So, he's leaning down, and by the time, he's almost sitting down. When he let that rope go, you ready. You not supposed to touch the saddle. When they let that horse go, well, naturally, that horse, from that backing up, he's still going back more. He go and he get right down on his haunches. When he come up, look out. You either drop behind or you going fly. Nobody stayed on more than two bucks, most of them, every one of 'em. These (chuckles) Parker Ranch boys, all of them, they had good riders up here. I watched them. Good thing I never go the first night, eh? Watch all them.

So, I stayed on the horse. He bucked till they fired a gun after so many seconds. Then, they fired the gun, and you supposed to jump off. But I wasn't going to jump off. I said, "No, no. I came here to ride. The hell with the jumping off." Then, they have these guys come around, pick you off the horse. They pick up the rider. But I stayed on. And you want to see the crowd roar and roar. Boy, I had plenty friends, you know. These guys from Maui, all the big ranchers there. "He's Maui boy." They all say, "Kona boy, Kona boy." Then, the guys with the megaphone--like today, they have loudspeaker. Those days, you just talk. Small place, eh?

You the hero, now. You ride, see? The other guys all fall off. And I come from way up in the sticks. Nobody even heard about this damn place. Well, that's when these guys, where I went register, boy, they were right there. They asked me if I going ride again, you see? Then, they wanted me come daytime down there to ride in town. Ride, not the bucking horse, but the other. . . . They had plenty horses--these trick horses. Just ride just to advertise. So, I said, "Well, I get nothing to do. What the hell. I come down ride."

Meantime, I said, after I got ride, "Well, gosh, these Kona people here, I never met before." The sailors on the boat. Well, they

know me because we used to ship cattle down here. Every month, we ship cattle. They see me down the wharf. They all were rooting for me all the time. Mauna-loa sailors. "Oh, Kona boy, Kona boy" and all that.

Then, there were the rich people up there--Mrs. Paris and, I think that was her sister, Carrie Robinson. They were kind of old people. They were sitting on the bleachers. They send somebody over to ask me to go over there. They want to see me. Evidently, they knew my grandparents before. They were from Kona; they knew 'em. So, I went over, and I introduced myself. The old lady, Carrie Robinson, she reach in her purse and give me ten bucks in gold. That time, gold, eh? Oh, boy, I rich now. (Chuckles) Ten bucks. Then, the sister gave me three dollars in silver. Boy, that's all right. Then, the other people come. More people, the Kona people around.

Then, these Maui ranchers. I remember this guy, Lawrence Smith. He used to work for the Baldwins. He took boys down there. They never stay on the horse. Well, they were boosting me, "Maui boy, Maui boy."

Then, the crowd. Next night, oh, draw a big crowd because the island boy stayed on, eh? So, all right. This time, the first horse I got was a grey mare. They gave me that one. Well, nobody stays on that one. There was three of these horses there, nobody stayed on. You know, that Indian guy supposed to be good, he never ride that horse. Show off. He had some other horses don't buck as much.

Well, the next night I come in, the same guy hold the horse. I got on the horse. I was still climbing on the horse. I never even take my hat off. The bugga let the horse go. That time, I was holding the pommel to climb on. That damn horse go down; he buck. I stayed on 'em. He was going around in a circle, till, finally, I got in the saddle. By the time, they fired a shot to stop, you know. Well, the people booed this guy. Booed 'em because, you know, if I had my hat off, that's a different story, they let him go. But I was still climbing. I got back in the saddle--they came to pick me up. Well, people booed 'em. By and by, they asked me. "You want the same one?"

I said, "No, I don't care if same one. Any horse, I ride 'em." I said, "This horse already been bucking. No use riding the same horse."

So, now, they gave me Honest John. Honest John, he's the one that nobody ever stay on that son of a gun. Yeah, that same night. And I went there; I rode this one. And I stayed on. I stayed on two horses, now.

So, the third night, they had White Lightning. He wasn't too wide, but tall son of a gun. Well, that bugga, everybody who rode 'em,

they never stay one buck on 'em. Nobody stayed. Some of 'em, when that horse come up, you standing up behind him. He just slide under you. That's a fact. And he buck. Oh, that son of a gun tall. Well, I don't think that bugga been in a harness. He was a kind of ornery bugga. So, I saddle that bugga. This time, brave already, I stayed on these other ones. Same thing. I put my saddle; that guy, he's trying to pull that saddle back. I said, "No, no. Leave my saddle alone." I put the saddle--put way as far forward as possible. I got on. Well, that horse buck till he couldn't buck no more. I never jump off, not one horse. They tell me jump off. This guy, he got kind of mad. He said, "You going spoil the horse."

I said, "I don't care. I came here to ride, not to jump off a horse."

Well, everything is over, they wanted me stay down. This guy wanted me work for him. The boss of this circus--that show. I said, "No, no. I get a job in Kona. I going back up there."

He said, "You come down in the morning and you'll get your payoff." Son of a gun, they gave me 300 bucks and a saddle. I got a saddle. I still have the saddle. That, how many years ago? I still have the saddle. Of course, the saddle, it's not the same saddle like that time. Today, it's \$500 saddle, but those days, maybe, you can get about \$100, \$75 maybe.

WN: How many people came to see the rodeo?

WT: I don't know. Maybe 300 people, maybe 400. Those days not like today. The park is kind of small park.

WN: Who sponsored that?

WT: Must be that Eddie Fernandez, I think. You know, they were show people. They bring the show in. And not only that. They have that kind of a sideshow, the horses. They have bulls, too, you know. Those bucking bulls. I never ride the bull. But they had some good riders, though. Those Mainland guys, they can ride bulls. They no can ride horse, but they ride bulls. Those guys, in the army, there--cavalry or whatever. They had couple of little darky boys there. They stay on 'em, boy. Damn bulls. They buck, those. They're not the kind today. Those buggas, they had Brahma. Some of those damn steers, they get horns on, but they put the ox ball--they put the rubber tip, eh? They want to gouge you.

But those days, they have pretty safety. . . . See, they wind that fence around. But they off the ground--maybe two feet off the ground. So, if you fall, you slide right under, eh? Had all these shavings in the arena, small place. You take a horse in the ranch. You get on a horse and let him go, by gosh, he take off in the pasture. Big pen, eh? Over there, small. There's a wire all

around. But those horses trained to just stay one place and buck. They twist and all that, but only in one place. And if they dump you, you're right in the sawdust there. But those buggas buck, you know. Son of a gun. By gosh, I had my wallet in my pocket there, and whatever I had in my pocket--knife and all that--they shake you up so damn much, everything flew out of there. Oh, that was fun. I thought that was great. So, like today, gosh, [the rodeo would] probably be in T.V. and be in everything, yeah? Supposed to be the champion bronco rider. But, you know, all they had was the Honolulu Advertiser and the Star-Bulletin. You know, those two papers, in no time, they put this. (Chuckles) Had it in the paper.

WN: Had your name in the paper?

WT: Little bit, yeah, yeah.

WN: You said that you had to go back to Kona for your job, yeah? You were offered a job in Honolulu? How come you didn't take the job in Honolulu?

WT: Well, now, I worked [Kona] one year. I liked the place here. That was my job. This guy, he wanted to take me Mainland, go follow the show. Maybe as long as the show last, why, you got a job. After that, you're on your own, eh? I wasn't brought up for that kind of. . . .

WN: Before coming to Kona, what did you expect of Kona? What were your impressions of Kona before coming?

WT: I tell you, I had no idea what the damn place looked like. I thought, maybe, like Kula or someplace there. Kona wasn't even in the map. You never hear about Kona. He hear about Hilo and all that side. Kohala. Wherever [there were sugar] plantations, you hear about 'em. Over here never have no plantation. The only thing we hear, "Kona coffee, Kona coffee." Talk about Kona coffee. That's about all we hear. Never hear about ranches or anything.

WN: So, when you got here, it rained a lot, eh?

WT: Oh, gosh, the rain. Today, you don't have that kind of rain like before. You had more forest before, too, I think. Everything change, eh? This was all forest in here. Right here, the 'ōhi'a trees. We never have this Christmas berries and all that. We had regular native trees--kukui trees, plenty around here. No more paved roads. No water line. Telephone, two wires running right through and everybody on that line.

And the boats used to come in every ten days. That's why I had to get the hell out of Honolulu that time, come up. Because if I miss that boat, I got to stay another ten days down there. You come over, you're on five-dollar steerage. If you come from Hookena, and you going to Honolulu, well, you figure, two days to get down

there. They might be down here. They come from Milolii, or Hoopuloa, used to be. And as they get away, that boat tie up down in Napoopoo all night, load coffee. If you over there, you have to stay there. And then, you go Kawaihae, you stay, maybe, another night. See how many days you on the boat, eh?

WN: How many stops did the boat make?

WT: Well, they start from Ka'u--two ports in Ka'u. Then, they come Hoopuloa, that's three. Hookena, and then Napoopoo, well, that's five, eh? Sometime, they stop in Keauhou, but most times, they bypass. But they stop in Kailua. Then, you get to Kawaihae. Then, Mahukona. I think they stop Lahaina, [Maui] too. So, every ten days, you'll get a boat.

WN: So, if you board the boat in Kailua, you have to make all those stops?

WT: Yeah, yeah. Well, sometimes, you get on down Hookena or Napoopoo, you get on there in the night, maybe--in the evening. Sometimes, they sleep here or they go Kailua, sleep. In the morning, they start loading up again, eh? And you on the boat already. You on the same island, but you how many days? Well, as I say, take you five dollars, maybe, go to Honolulu, steerage. Or maybe eight dollars for a room.

But it cost you more from here to Kailua on land than on the boat. Not everybody had a car, you know. They had couple of guys here. I know there was Iwamoto, Oyama, they had a rent service car if you go down. Maybe you go Kailua, cost you three dollars, maybe.

WN: On land?

WT: Yeah.

WN: But if you caught the boat in, say, Hookena, you pay the same amount as if you caught the boat in Kailua?

WT: Yeah. Actually, the boat had more freight than anything else. But there's no other way passengers go down there. They go to Hilo, well, they had the other big boats--that Mauna-kea, Kilauea.

WN: So, as a cowboy for McCandless Ranch, how much were you paid?

WT: Fifty dollars a month.

WN: Was this more or less than what you were getting for Dillinghams in Honolulu?

WT: Yeah, yeah. Dillingham, that's around \$50. Fifty dollars, the first month, I think. Then, I get \$60. But those days, you single, what the devil, you know? They feed you and all that. There's

nothing to buy. You have all the fun. Those days, all you think is fun. Go to the show. Over here, well, maybe once in two weeks, you come down, go to the show. Twenty cents.

WN: What show? Where?

WT: They had theaters down here. They still have one old one down here, yet. Well, this Kona here, before, was little further up by Manago [Hotel]. They had a showhouse. If you go there, they start 7 o'clock [p.m.]. You might be there till 1 o'clock in the morning. The damn thing cut. The tape [film], every time cut. And the engine stop. No electricity. They have their own dynamo. You know, they have a old Cadillac or one of those old big automobiles. They put a generator on 'em. Then, they turn 'em over. Well, half the time, the darn thing never work, eh? It work and it cut. Then, you sit in there, waiting for it. Those days, they had Tom Mix and Charlie Chaplin and that kind. Then, they get continued till next week and all that, so the people got to go see what happened next. Like us, we in the ranch. We never have much time, but if you hit the road going down there that show night, by gosh, you going to find 20 cents somewhere to go to that show. (Chuckles)

WN: So, \$50 a month included housing, too?

WT: House, and feed you, and everything.

WN: Where did you live?

WT: On the ranch. We had a ranch house down here. Well, I had a decent place to stay. The boss had one room and I had one. Big old house there. Then, when the boss comes up, he stays with me and we get a cook. But when I'm all alone, I used to cook, myself. But I never stayed, too. I was always up the mountain. All the boys, they take chances cooking. But I trade with 'em. I tell 'em I go drive the horses, do outside, and let them. . . . (Chuckles) I don't care to get inside the kitchen in those days.

WN: So, where did the other guys live?

WT: All lived in a bunkhouse. Well, you know, these houses, they had the little rooms here and there.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You said that when you first came to Kona, you were, more or less, a ranch hand?

WT: Horse trainer. That's what I came here . . .

WN: You were a horse trainer for the first two months. Where did you train the horses? You told me that you trained them down Napoopoo Beach?

WT: Napoopoo. Well, actually, we trained a few up there. We kind of halter break 'em little bit. But up there rain all the time. You know, when rain, the horse's hoof get soft, eh? All rocks up there. Well, you can't ride 'em. So, I took the horses down to Napoopoo. You been down there? That used to be all sand beach there. You see where they sell leis and all that? I think, now, they have those lei sellers down there. Then, there's a heiau. Well, right on the north side of the heiau had a pen over there. We put the horses all in the pen there.

Then, from there, we pick out one by one. There was three of us down there, so we take the horses. We put 'em out on the sand, you see. We get 'em on the sand. We saddle 'em up in the pen, and then take 'em out, let 'em go on the sand. Well, of course, we lead 'em first. Show 'em where we want to go. Then, the first time ride, you lead one guy, so the horse know what it's all about. We put a saddle on, just lead 'em around without anybody on 'em first. After he knows how to go, then we take one tame horse. He go ahead, the other horse follow. They scared the water, eh? You know, when the water come up. We got 'em so that, by and by, we try to take 'em till they go down, and they smell the water, and they start pawing down there. Then, they get used to it. Then, it was easy.

So, I had 16 horses and one mule down there. But we kept the horses about half a mile away from that. We had another pen there where we feed the horses. We had somebody cut grass, come down. My job was just take 'em over. I had two helpers. Ride 'em all down below. Then, we tie 'em up. You halter and tie 'em around. They had some kiaue trees and monkeypod trees. We tie 'em in the shade. Down there, strange place, they get tame quick. Then, these other two boys, I let them brush the horses down and all that. And I ride. We had 'em down there, oh, about a month, I think. By that time, they not as strong as when they first come down. But they getting tame, now. We feed 'em the grain. Then, we take 'em to the mountain, let 'em go for about a month, and we bring 'em in again, ride 'em. Some of them got real tame, you know, never buck. But some of 'em, after we ride 'em again, they kind of buck little bit again. Try and keep on riding until they all. . . . But we got 'em all tame.

WN: How many horses at one time did you take down?

WT: Sixteen horses. I took 16 down and a mule down. That was a big time, but after that, I trained the rest up the mountain. Only few at a time.

WN: How did you bring the horses down to Napoopoo?

WT: Drive 'em down. You lead one, the rest, all, they follow. Well, those days, no more cars like today. You can go on the road. Those days, around these roads here, maybe in one week, you get two

cars go to Hilo. Then, you don't know when they coming back. They probably get to Hilo. Sometimes, they never reach Hilo. All the flat tires on the road. (Chuckles)

WN: In those days, did they have that Napoopoo road?

WT: Just a rough road. Yeah, rough. But we take short cut. We go to . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE NO. 9-60-1-81

WN: . . . that Sure Save Super Market?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, the trail from the mountain comes down right through there, you see. Then, from there, we cut straight down through the coffee field. Then, from the coffee field, we get down to the lower road. Then there was another old wagon road that goes right down to Napoopoo. And you come out where that old Hawaiian church. Then, we had a holding place down there for the horses. We take cattle down the same way. But if you go around the main highway, be long way around, eh? Just short cut, go down. But a long ways. Because from where we bring the horses, oh, I'd say it's. . . . This ranch is five miles across. From up here, Greenwell, right over to the other end.

WN: How many acres was the McCandless Ranch?

WT: Sixty thousand acres. But, of course, they had [owned] half of that, I think, the Bishop Estate leasehold and a little government land. But they had about 30,000 of their own land.

WN: So, they owned about 30,000, and they leased about 30,000?

WT: Yeah, about 30, 35 [thousand], maybe. They still own that, you know. They still own that land. They never sell any land.

WN: Was there anything else besides ranching on the land? Was there any coffee or anything like that?

WT: Well, the ranch, they never had no coffee. But, after a while, they bought more land. The land that they bought later, there was coffee fields, I think, over there. They bought all that waste coffee. They kept some; they leased out to some farmers. But, today, no more coffee. All in . . .

WN: What happened to Mr. Dowsett?

WT: Well, I guess he broke up with. . . . He probably sold his share to

McCandless. And he died, I think. I lost track of him after I got out of there.

WN: So, after a couple of months of training horses, then you said you became a cowboy?

WT: Well, I came boss of the cowboys--head cowboy.

WN: What did a cowboy have to do?

WT: You get the whole ranch there. That ranch had mostly all wild cattle. We had to gather 'em in. Go out every day, mend fences. There's a lot of fence work to do. Fence up, make the area smaller, so we can move the cattle in. We still had to tame the calves. Those cows, they would bring 'em in. We just milk a few for the house and make a little butter for our own use. But we get the calves in. In the night, the cows out by themselves, and the calves in a different, small little paddock. In the morning, we put 'em together. Feed the calves and the cows, separate 'em. That's regular daily--every day, that. And that way, you get the calves tame, eh?

In that big area like that, there were all wild cattle there. They had very few tame cattle. Everything was wild. And that was all raw land--all forest. Not much grass. There was all fern. The cattle got to live on fern. Mostly all this old Mexican longhorn cattle. I think, they couldn't bring good cattle in there because there's nothing for them to eat. The cattle, good cattle---they bought some bulls from Parker Ranch. But they only, maybe, last one or two years. They die. They can't survive in that winter up there. No running water. They have to go in the swamps to drink water. Had a few water holes and few tanks, those days. They never spend no money to get up there. There was no such thing as bulldozer, where you can go up, make road and all that.

You see, they had their own ranch. They own all this ranch, but they have to go through somebody else's land to get up there. Had to go through Greenwell's, you see? That's why they had to go Kealakekua [Ranch]. They [McCandless] don't have land over there, but they use that Greenwell road to go up. Then, they got a trail--well, all horse trail--that's all they had. Then, you come all the way across. Their own land, all swamps. By and by, we got together--the boys there. When I became the head over there, boss, I cut a horse trail. Well, we come down where it was pretty swampy, you know. And that trail, I used to come down. Weekends, we come down. Instead of going all around the other way, 12 miles around, you just cut straight down. Maybe four miles, you're down the [main] road, eh?

WN: Was it the location that was bad or just that they didn't maintain it?

WT: It's just wild country--all forest. Great big trees. Well, the sun can't get inside, so all swamp, eh? Not much cattle there. The cattle try to get out in the dry place. Where there were cattle down in the swamps, why, some of the strong ones lived, they have calves, the calves die or the mother die, like that. They kept on going till they get this strain that get kind of used to that kind of way of grazing. So, they survived. That's how you got wild cattle all over.

WN: By "wild cattle," what do you mean by . . .

WT: Well, they're not tame by any means. You got to go out and. . . . You can't go and drive 'em. You can't herd 'em in. You got to rope 'em outside or have a trap set for 'em.

WN: Oh, you mean, they were raised and born out in the . . .

WT: Yeah. They never see a man before then, you see. That jungle, they have that vine that grows all over the tree. You can't walk through the damn place, it's so tangled. And had lot of wild pigs. You get any kind of grass grow, the pig root up the ground, grass and everything. The cattle, actually, were living on fern. And that vine that grows--'iwa'iwa vine, they live on that. Where there were greens, that's all they live on. Then, the cattle way outside, in the summertime, they had sheep grass, they call. Sheep grass. But when it come the winter, you get trouble again because no more grass outside. Too cold. Then, you push 'em down the forest. Well, the cattle survive down there, then they get kind of weak. When the summertime comes, they go back up. We go down and kind of herd 'em up. Many of them, too weak. They can't go back; they make.

So, that was a hard life. Those guys, they own the land like that, they never make no money there. But they owned the land, you see. That's one thing. McCandless, they were lucky. They kept their land. Most of these other guys--Paris and all them--they owned that land before. They sold 'em for almost nothing just because they couldn't raise nothing there. But these other guys, McCandless, they had other place to get income. So, this is kind of, little bit, maybe, get their tax deduction. You know, like wipe off, because they lose money here; they make somewhere else.

WN: About how many head of cattle did McCandless have in those days?

WT: Well, they must have had a thousand head or maybe two thousand. That's hard to tell, you know.

WN: Is that little bit for 60,000 acres?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, for that kind of land, I guess that was plenty. Big area, but, gosh, maybe a hundred heads or maybe a couple hundred heads of cattle, that's all. Cattle, they roam all

over the place. If they used to a certain place, get grass there, they all going to flock in there, eat up everything, then they move another place. Then, they had lot of sheep. Upper land, why, the sheep were eating all the grass. Wild sheep, too. That was a hard life. That's why, they couldn't pay the guys too much money. That was like a school up there. The guys work there; the first payday, off they go to any old. . . . Cowboys get \$25 a month, \$30 at the most.

WN: You mean, you got paid less as a cowboy than as a horse trainer?

WT: Well, about the same. Everything all the same. Well, maybe about \$50. Those days, to me, was all fun. In 1923, I got married. And they promised they going to give me a raise, give me a raise. They say, "Well, maybe we give you a hundred dollars." So, I figure, \$100, I can feed the family. But they never did give me any raise. At the end of the year, they give a little bonus. Very little.

WN: The price for the cattle that they raised--the wild kind of cattle--was it much lower than the regular kind of cattle?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, those days, you got to ship all the cattle Honolulu. No more market here for 'em. Ship 'em to Honolulu. They grade 'em. They go by the quality of your beef. But I don't think they got more than, maybe, ten cents a pound.

WN: This is dress meat?

WT: No, they use 'em for table, like that. I guess, the small restaurant, they buy 'em for stew meat.

WN: How much was, like, Greenwell's cattle?

WT: Well, they might be getting about three, four cents more. Maybe five cents.

WN: How did you herd them down to Napoopoo?

WT: We drive 'em down. Drive 'em down through the Greenwell place. They couldn't come through their own land. When you get way out in the sticks out there, then you get 'em in a small place. You herd 'em. They get trail and plenty brush around. So, one, the leaders, they follow you, then the rest follow behind. But when you get out in the real open place, oh gosh, they ever break loose, the whole bunch go. Usually take you half an hour, maybe, to get down to the fence. They're there in five minutes. You down the fence, and they start breaking all over. You lose 'em there. Drove 'em around, herd 'em back again. Oh, that was no fun, boy. Today, easy. Everything, all, truck haul away.

WN: How long it took you to herd the cattle from up the ranch down to Napoopoo?

WT: We corral 'em. Take, maybe, a couple weeks to get 'em all down to the last holding place [on the ranch]. Then, we hold 'em there for little while. We used to go herd 'em, so they get used to going. Then, when we take 'em outside, when we go out in this Greenwell place, we start 5 o'clock in the morning. Get there early and we get to Napoopoo about 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening. That's only about maybe nine miles down there. That's all downhill. And of course, some of the cattle don't make it. They run around, get hot. They come from a cold place, get a hot day. Sometimes we have to hang 'em up, save the meat. They go to a hot place, and they get fever, they die, eh? So, if we think that animal not going make it, we butcher 'em. Meat for the boys.

That's the earlier part, you see. When I through that, I work for this contractor.

WN: So, you said that you got married in 1923? And you told me earlier that ranching, the money, wasn't very good, yeah?

WT: Yeah, well, you know, \$50 can't take care a wife and one child, eh? In 1924, my first child was born. You see, whatever money we make, we saved a little. Even \$50, you don't spend 'em all. Those days, they say, "You want your money?"

I say, "Hold 'em. By and by, when I need 'em, I get 'em." End of the year, why. . . . They get the interest, but we don't get the interest. (Chuckles) As far as that goes, those old-timers, before, everything for themselves.

WN: Overall, how did you feel about your job as a cowboy?

WT: Oh, well, I'd say, I enjoyed it all the time. I never regret that. That's what I wanted. Even when I worked for the contractor, I used to go with the other ranchers. Spare time, you know. You work with the contractor; Saturday, you don't work, maybe. Sunday, you don't work. I go out with these other ranchers and play around with 'em.

WN: What you folks did Sundays?

WT: We go hunting or go. . . . I've always had a car, you see. I've always had a car, so we can go. When I worked for the county, made little bit more money, then. On your own, you can raise your own chickens, and pigs, and whatever you have. Then, we made money. Sometimes, some of these little farmers, maybe they get a steer or something. They tie up 'round the place and feed 'em. They don't know what to do with 'em. They sell to me. I buy 'em. Maybe pay 'em \$50. And I hang 'em on the tree, slaughter 'em up, cut 'em up, sell 'em. Make another 50 bucks on the side. Pigs, same way. I get order. They say, "We want to get some pigs." So, I go around. If I see a nice 100-pound pig over there, pay 'em \$10, maybe, sell 'em for \$15. You know? There's always something like that.

When I worked with the county, I learned to be a plumber. Not only carpenter. Those days, as I said, they never have patent toilets and all that. But the schools, they had enough water to put up the teachers' cottages. All the cottages, they have two toilets in each duplex. So, each side had a toilet. They had this plumber from Hilo come over--contractor from Hilo. A big, fat Portuguese guy. He comes there, he sit on the box there, and he caulking the pipes. Those days, was all that cast iron pipe. He melt the lead. You seen, eh? And he'll caulk.

We worked till 2:30, our job pau. I go down. "Joe, you need some help here?" My idea was to learn. Maybe someday, I want to put some in my house, why, I know to do it, eh?

He say, "Well, if you have time, all right."

I said, "I want to learn how to caulk the pipes." So, we get the pipes.

"Don't get that. Get this." And I go over there. He says, "Put this." He hook 'em around and give me the tools to caulk that up. Then, go melt lead. Those days, they never even had a torch. They had a regular fire over there, little wood under the fire. Heat up your lead. Then, you get this ladle, pour your lead in, and then caulk 'em up here. They do it. They take their time, and they make good job, those days. They not in no rush. So, I learned that. Every time they come over, I go down there and I work for nothing. I don't work for pay; I want to learn. After about one year, I work a little more with the county. We get more busy building more cottages and all that. That's how I went to get my license. I got license, eh?

WN: This is when you worked for the county, yeah? Nineteen twenty-four [1924]? I want to get into that later, but I want to ask why you left ranching in 1924 and got into construction?

WT: Well, I told you, I never make enough money on the ranch. Fifty dollars, you can't support your family, eh? So, you work with a contractor, you get three dollars a day, you make a little bit more money.

WN: How did you get that contractor job?

WT: When I had my house--not this house, I had another place over Kealia. I wasn't with the ranch, then. I was pau from the ranch. [One day] I was digging up some guava stumps. The house was already built.

WN: Oh, you had quit the ranch?

WT: Yeah, quit already. I just quit. I built the house when I was still with the ranch. Then, I needed a lot of time to clean yard

and make all that. Small house, but. . . . Then, I was cleaning yard that morning. Was about 9 o'clock, I think. Digging there. This guy [James Lewis] comes over there. This contractor, he lives right across the street from where I live. Only temporary. He built a house up across there. Then, the people who he built the house for, he was friends to him, and they told him while he's in Kona, he can live there. They had a room downstairs. So, he comes down, and he look over the yard. He saw me there. He said, "Good morning, boy!" You know, he kind of hard of hearing guy, so he talk loud.

I said, "Good morning." I knew who he was, but I never talked to him before.

He said, "What you doing there?"

(Chuckles) So, I said, "Well, I just kind of digging up some stumps around here."

He says, "Well, you let the guava grow. You come work for me." Just like that.

I knew he was a carpenter. I said, "I'm no carpenter."

He said, "You can come work for me."

So, I said, "When do I start?"

He said, "Right now."

Well, I got up. I walked around with him. We went down. I told him I didn't have tools. But he said, "No, I just want you. I don't want your tools." So, we go down. Oh, about a thousand feet from my house, that's where they building this recreation hall for the community there. So, we go down there. First thing, he give me a bucket of creosote. Creosote all the battens and under the foundation there. I did that. That day was a hot day.

He went off. He come back, he say, "You all through?"

I say, "Yeah." New boy, sweep clean, eh? Work like hell, you know.

He say, "Well, all right." So, he put me on something else there. They had couple of boys--carpenters--working in there, but I don't know them. I don't know, maybe 2 or 3 o'clock--no, 3 o'clock, they quit--but anyway, he come back after lunch. I was just about pau here. He says, "Well, do something around there."

So, next day, I come back. He tell me, "The carpenters all pau now." The carpenters move some other job. Only cesspool diggers, they were in the back, digging the cesspool. "But, I think, you

come up here." He fasten this latch. You know how they put the latch like that?

So, I look at that, hell, I never put those stuff before. I didn't know nothing about. . . . I told him, "I never do this kind of work."

He said, "Well, I show you." So, he goes there and he get it started. How you use this for gauge and all that. I started that. Then, he takes off. It wasn't too big a place. All finish. Carpenters had dropped nails and all that on the ground. I clean up whatever junk around there. I clean all that up.

"You all through?"

"Yeah."

"Oh." He never say, "You work too fast," or anything like that. But I work. I just work. I don't sit around after that's pau. I see something that ought to be done. I know they have to clean up the damn place. Me or somebody got to clean 'em, so. So, I guess he thought, well, I was pretty good guy, so he asked me, "You know how drive a truck?"

I say, "Yeah, I can drive." He had a old junk Model-T or Model-A or some damn thing.

"Well, you go down Ke'ei Beach and haul some of that gravel [from] down there." Those days, no more crush gravel. Beach pebble and sand, bring 'em up there. Now, they going make this concrete steps and platform. Okay, get all the stuff up there in one day, two days, all that stuff. Cesspool diggers, they pau. So, he say, well, he'll put the form. We get a form, then he fill up rock in there and all that. These other boys, they been working with him quite a while. They know more than I do. So, we mix cement, fix up all the cement. All pau.

On Saturday, the carpenters no work. They do their own work home, farm. He said, "You work Saturday? You work Sunday?"

I said, "I work any day. As long as I get job, I work."

He said, "Well, I get this job over here. Magoon's. You want to go with me?"

I said, "Okay." Go over there. He had some repair work, gutters, and all that stuff. I go there, and all I do is just hold. He doing all the work. I just holding this, putting the thing up, go get this. Well, I started from that. Then, when I get school jobs, I go up school. We moving school buildings from one location to another.

WN: What schools did you move?

WT: Konawaena. Well, that's the first job, Konawaena. Then, I still had my job. They get all the carpenters coming there. They all would come and go haul stuff. Haul sand and all that. Then, the lumber truck comes up from Konawaena. That's their station. We need some lumber for Honaunau, so he dumps the stuff there, and I take the truck and deliver 'em. Take 'em down the school. They want sand, we had sand.

Then, by and by, I got to be pretty good carpenter then. I got little bit more. Go put roof and all that. Up here, we have all this tin roof, eh? We got to put 'em on.

WN: What about the things like coffee shacks and things like that?

WT: I never work.

WN: You didn't do those?

WT: Never. I had mostly all these county-built school cottages and all that. School buildings.

WN: This is when you were still working for Lewis?

WT: Yeah, Lewis. Thirteen months, I worked for him.

WN: Let me ask you this. You left ranching because the pay wasn't too good. Didn't you miss ranching?

WT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, I missed that. But, as I said, I used to make up for that, once in a while--you know, when I'm not working--I go with these other ranchers. I used to go up with them. Where I worked before, there was no boss, and they do what they want to do. They used to come hire me when they driving those--ship cattle, eh? I know all the country. Lot of these guys don't know the place, eh?

WN: You mean, for free?

WT: No, no. When I go with 'em, they pay me. Now, they pay me little different. They pay me five dollars a day when I go work there. So, work, per diem, they pay you more, eh? So, I get little work there. But I never left my contractor. I worked with him all day. I never lay off one day of work every day.

WN: You told me that ranching is hard, and you have to get a "PhD" before you become a cowboy? Can you tell me about that?

WT: Yeah. Well, I tell you. Guys all talk about they want to go work on a ranch. They want to be cowboy. You know, when you talk about ranch, the first thing, they talk about cowboy. So, they come to

me, and they say, "You get one cowboy job?"

I say, "Yeah. Before you can be a cowboy, you got to get a degree, a "PhD." I got mine when I was 12 years old. I worked with my father. He gave me a "PhD," and from there on, I was on my own. Now, if you want to be a cowboy, you come with me. I'll give you a job. But you not going to sit on a horse till you earn your degree."

"Well, what the hell you work on the ranch if you can't ride a horse?" he tell me.

I say, "Well, you'll learn." So, we get there. First thing we do, we go work on the fence. Making this fence repair or making new fence, like that. Those days, they never have it easy, like today--you get a steel post you just pound 'em down, eh?

You got to pound 'em, push 'em in. You got to dig holes. Those days, all with that digger, you see? So, that's "PhD," eh, "post hole digger."

(Laughter)

WT: So, once you know how to fix a fence, dig holes, then we put you on the horse. You ride a horse, follow the fence. Over there, that place needs a post, you go put a post in there and go around there. When you graduate from that, by the time you can sit properly on a horse, then we take you out, go out and herd some cows then, you see?

WN: So, it's not all glamorous, eh?

WT: No, no. No, no. You see, the cowboys supposed to be the lows of all the lows. You can't be any lower than the cowboy. (Chuckles) They tell you about pick and shovel, you know. The Hawaiians all work that one. The Orientals, they never go work on the road, because the pay is small and you got a boss standing behind your back all the time. And those days, they get after you. Today, why, they get union leader. This boss get a little rough with you, they throw their pick down and they go call the leader. But those days, no, no. You want the job. You got to feed your family. They don't care what they tell you. You work.

Well, cowboy, same thing. Most of the cowboys come over. They go up there, they think cowboys. . . . They go up there, the first payday, they quit. They no work, eh? So, they go there, "We supposed to be riding a horse. We not riding a horse." They might ride a horse, go fix the fence, from one place to another. But what the hell. You go out there and chase cattle and like that, you got to be a cowboy.

You got to know how to ride a horse, sit on the horse. First

thing, stay on that horse. Then, you going out, and you got to go out and lasso this animal. Some of 'em, if they lasso 'em, then they run away with the rope, they get 'em tied up. Then, after you catch 'em, what you going do if the damn animal charge your horse? You got to know how to handle that rope. Up till today, there's plenty of these guys. They go in the rodeo, rodeo. It's all rodeo cowboy. They nothing. Those guys, you see 'em all. They're well treated. It's right in front of you--all flat land. And they run right up to them, throw their rope with the loop already open. All stiff rope. They just up and down the thing.

But we make our own lariats, you see, out of rawhide, eh? And you have to know how to swing that rope to keep the loop open. You don't go up to ten feet and throw the rope. It's 50 feet away, you throw. Because that animal is a wild animal. The moment you get too close, they turn around, charge you. Kill your horse. So, you got to know how to toss that rope.

And not only just swinging it with your wrist and throw 'em. You got to put strength there and throw that rope. After you catch 'em, that animal, when it comes to the jerk, that animal going turn around and charge you. So, you got to know what side of the tree to go around. All trees, eh? The main thing is to get 'em around the tree. But you better be sure you got the long end of the rope. (Chuckles) Well, that's it, you see. It's hot and all that. It's not so easy as people think it is.

WN: How long does it take to learn all this?

WT: If you make up your mind you want to do that and you think you want to be a real horseman and cowboy, well, it doesn't take you too long. Couple of months, you could learn that. But meantime, you practice all the time, eh? I always tell people, "You practice on foot till you get the feel."

The main thing is to handle that rope. After you get that rope the way you want 'em, then you ride on the horse and try it with a horse. Don't just go out and try to catch 'em. You put a cow head on a post or something like that, and you running your horse and throw, and see if you. . . . Instead of the animal running, you running with the horse. You know, throw. So, it's hot and takes time. We get guys here, they been cowboys all their life, they not cowboys yet. You know what I mean? They all right go down rodeo and all that kind, but you get up in the hills there. It's up and down, jumping logs and holes, and everything there. You got to watch. You watch, if the horse, he don't want to go, he stop short. You'll be going the other way, see? All that kind.

I been through all that. Even at my age, I still go out, rope 'em. I don't say I'm the best, but I can catch 'em. After you catch 'em, you have to know how to handle 'em. I get these boys, these haole boys, they come. They like, I teach 'em. That's why I say,

I get all this. I don't have to pay anybody. They come to me. You see, all these telephone calls. "We going to work cattle in a few days, this weekend."

So, they tell me, "When you work cattle, let me know. I want to come."

They leave their jobs just to come. They want to ride a horse. I lend 'em horse. I have horses. I let 'em ride. I treat 'em good; they help me. And every once in a while, I have a party. "Go ahead, you guys. Have a good time."

WN: Okay. Maybe some other time we can talk about your county construction work and your days of a politician.

WT: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 9-80-2-81 and 9-81-2-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Willie Thompson (WT)

March 4, 1981

Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Willie Thompson. Today is March 4, 1981, and we're at his home in Honaunau, Kona, Hawaii.

Mr. Thompson, in 1925, when you started working for the county. . . . First, can you tell me what kind of recreation or what was around Kona that you could do around that time?

WT: Well, they had football, baseball, a little basketball. As far as the school, you know, had school activities. That's what they had. But baseball was the main sport here. They had all kinds. They had a Japanese baseball team. And a haole group up here. The Hawaiian group from Hookena. They had about four different teams, and they compete.

WN: This is not schools, though, huh?

WT: This is outside the school. Basketball came later. At first, we didn't have no place to play. And then, when they built the gymnasium, that's when they started basketball.

WN: Where did they build the gymnasium?

WT: Up in Konawaena.

WN: What about things like movies?

WT: We had little movies once a week. Maybe twice a week, I think. They had a old theater still down here. Right in the heart of Honaunau here. The old building there. Then they had one up at Kainaliu. Where else had? Honaunau, Kainaliu--well, Hookena had a small recreation hall they built there. Saturday nights, well, that's a big night. The people down there, all the farmers and all, they show up, go see the movie. Thirty cents for adults, 15 cents for the keikis. (Chuckles) Then, there was no electricity here, those days. They rigged up some old automobile and have a generator power from that, you see. So, they start from 7 o'clock

[p.m.], end up maybe 1 o'clock in the morning. The darn thing break down half of the time, you know. Cut, and the engine don't start. People wait for the. . . . They stay there till the end. (Chuckles)

WN: What about on the ranch itself? Were there things to do in the free time?

WT: There was no free time. You work for the ranch, you work from night to night. There were no eight hours. Long as you can see, you work. Well, Saturdays or Sundays, the boys, they can either go hunting or go fishing. The cowboys go down, fish. Then some of the other people come up, they have a little. . . . That's about the only sports they have or recreation. In the hills they go hunting.

WN: What about the transportation? How did people get around?

WT: They either walk or ride on their horse, mule or jackass. That's the only way to get around. There was a few automobiles around. They had this old Model-T taxi, but very few of them. People lived down here in Kealia, if they get as far as Kainaliu, that's a big day. Take 'em maybe all day to get up there. They no more hitchhike. Today, a car passing every minute. If there's a car passing, you might get a ride. But not (chuckles) those days. You walk. People from down in South Kona here, if they worked even right up in the boundary around Konawaena, they sleep up there. Weekdays, they sleep, and Friday evening, they go home. If you want to walk, all right. There were no automobiles those days to take you down to work.

WN: How were the roads in those days?

WT: Oh, gosh. Not one paved road, all gravel roads. Well, I think it was around about '26, they put a little pave here. In Kailua, they had it paved from down the pier down there now, up to the railroad track, by where Gomes is. I think the only reason why they put that paved road is the supervisor. Those days, supervisors, you know. Well, he lived up around the railroad track and he's working down Kailua, so they paved his road. (Laughs)

WN: What supervisor?

WT: James Ako.

WN: Supervisor for what?

WT: He was a county supervisor. Like now, they're councilmen, today. They call 'em councilmen, but those days was supervisors. Up here, they had a paved road from down. . . . There's a old road that they call Palipoku. From Palipoku up to Greenwell, where the meat market [Kona Meat Company], now, that was the only paved road in

South Kona. Palipoku. That's the road go down to the pier, that go down to Napoopoo. That was the only paved road they had here. I think was around about '26 when they paved that. Well, then there was no paved road for a long, long time.

Then this City of Refuge, there was no car road going down there. All trail, that's all, you go down there. Of course, the people from Napoopoo, they had this old King's highway. They come over there. Then, from this side, they go down by where the old school used to be, halfway down the hill. That's all they got. Then, the main highway was below. You go down there. The schools were all--not on this main highway now--it used be on the old. There was a old, main, around-the-island road, you know, below. The reason for that, most of the people lived below. The fishermen stay all down the beach. The farmers, they never used to farm way up here. They were more in the lower areas.

Everything was different. They had forest here. Forest used to come right here. You got more rain. You never have this kind of weather like today, hot. Those days, rain pretty whole year around.

WN: In those days, it rained more than today?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah. I think, in those days, you had more forest way down. On this lower road here where the trees--great, big kukui trees--all were, you go down in the shade all the time. Maybe, that's why the people can walk better those days, always under the trees and the shade. Today, they destroy all the old trees. Bulldozers come in, and they just plow everything out. Then you have all this darn rubbish kind of shrubbery growing. This Christmas berry trees they have here, that's taken over. All the forest lands have all been destroyed, eh? Now, they come here, and they want to reforest the place here. They go up and they plant the trees. Where the hell they going up in the mountain? They already get trees there. They bulldoze all the old trees, then go put this foreign trees in there. No make sense that way. That's the way I feel.

WN: Why do they do that?

WT: Well, they figure, if up there it rains all the time, the trees will grow. I guess that's the reason for that. I don't know. They figure, down here, more people, the farmers down this way. Well, if they plow up all the land, it would open up more land for farming. But they have all this forest reserves up here. You go up the hill here. Mile and a half from here, up, that's all forest reserves again, see? So, you have all the rainfall up there. But, of course, in the summer months, we get little more rain here. Winter months just like here now. You come here now, this is February. No more rain yet, eh? We used to have storms in the winter months. You get the windstorms, the rain, the ocean [was] rough.

Those days, we didn't have airplanes. No such thing. They had transportation all by steamship. You would order your Christmas supplies from Honolulu, by gosh, you don't get 'em till maybe February or March, sometime. In December and January, rough, the high seas here. The boat come in. They just come by, then wait little while; too rough, they go right to Ka'u. They come back, if it's calm enough they can land your freight here, they stop. Otherwise, they just toot the horn and off they go. If Kailua is calm enough they can land the boats down there, they would stop, but they don't dump their Hookena freight or whatever out there, because there's no way to bring 'em here.

WN: What about during coffee season?

WT: Well, coffee season, they ship all the coffee by boat. So, when they improved the roads, when they put better roads here, then they had overland transportation of freight. Haul the freight to Hilo, and then the coffee gets on the Matson boats and ship 'em right off. So, that's why they stopped the boats from coming here [South Kona]. You know, steamship, before, all go to Honolulu. Honolulu, and then you got to transship from Honolulu to the Mainland. So, when the trucks start hauling from here, they have better roads and all that, they ship everything to Hilo. One shipment get on the Matson boat and going straight to where they're going to take 'em.

WN: Was this coffee, too? They sent coffee to Hilo?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, that was the only way to ship 'em. Even till today, they ship 'em all to Hilo. Well, now, you have some boats come in. I think some of the Matson boats come to Kawaihae, so they probably ship from Kawaihae, too.

WN: What about cattle, though? This probably really affected the shipment of cattle, eh?

WT: Well, cattle, they shipped 'em. The boats come pick 'em up. But they know, when the stormy months, they don't ship cattle. They start from now, March, April, you can ship right up to about, maybe, October, November. Then, they stop during those winter months. They don't ship, because the ocean get pretty rough. Of course, they don't ship out as much as they do today. Today, there's more people who eat meat, eh? More people. Parker Ranch got their own boat, you know. The Hawaii Meat [Company]. So, they come here. Oh, about twice a month, they come and pick up all the little ranches' cattle. They ship 'em through Napoopoo. You got to swim 'em out, though, with the horse. I used to do some of that, too.

WN: You swam 'em out?

WT: Yeah. You drag 'em out with the horse until they. . . . As soon as they float, you toss your rope, the head rope, you throw it to the

boat. One of those rowboats come in, and they anchor there. Then, they put, let's see, I think maybe about four or five, six [cattle] on each side. They take anywhere from 8 to 12 head of cattle [alongside] the boat. Then they take 'em to the mother ship. They have a net sling. Put 'em under their belly, and they hoist 'em up. It was quite a sight. People from all over the country come here, watch 'em ship.

WN: Was that unique to Hawaii, that type of shipping?

WT: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

WN: How did they do it on the Mainland?

WT: Oh, they drive 'em right on the boat. Well, in Kahului, Maui, they had a boat come right up to the pier. You drive the cattle right onto the boat. Long after the old method--you know, drag 'em in with a horse--they build a better pier down at Kawaihae. So, they had a barge come right up to the pier. Then, they have a chute. They drive 'em into the chute, down into the boat.

WN: When did they build that pier in Kawaihae?

WT: Well, I don't know. Around in the '40s, I think. Maybe '38, '39, something like that.

WN: In 1925 you started working for the county. Why did you leave the employment of Mr. Lewis?

WT: Oh, he moved to Hilo. He had his jobs in Hilo. Then, he wanted me to go to Hilo, but I didn't want to go. I have a family here. I got married and had two kids, so I didn't want to go out of the district. Then, when I was pau from him, the county took me over. I did the same kind of work, carpenter work.

WN: Where were you living at the time?

WT: Over in Kealia. Kealia, that's Hookena side. I built that house in '24. We had a little piece of land there. We bought a piece about three acres. Started small, build a little house. And as your family grow, you add another room to it, and keep on adding. Quite a good-sized house after that.

WN: How did you get the county job?

WT: Through Mr. [Julian] Yates. Well, when he knew I was pau from Jim Lewis, he called me up and say, "You better come work with us." So, I went up, see 'em, and then he hired me. Gave me the first job to build a rock crusher. I told him I never been near a rock crusher before. (Chuckles) But they had the plans. I followed the plans. I learned a little bit with Jim Lewis. You know, he had plans on the buildings. I look at the plans, although I never

go to school to learn that, but just by working with Mr. Lewis. He was quite a guy, you know.

WN: Was a rock crusher different then than it is, say, today?

WT: Well, today, more modern, eh? They have portable crushers and all that, and it's all made already. Made in the Mainland or somewhere, then they come here to set 'em up. Those days, we have to build 'em all out of timber. The bunkers and all that, that's all heavy timber. The post will be 14 by 14 [feet]. There was no power tools, all hand. We had to use a wood saw. You know, two-man crosscut saw. That's how we cut everything that way. Well, those days, the labor was cheap, so take quite a while to build anything like that, but we got along all right.

WN: Your job was to make the rock crusher, or to operate it?

WT: No, make 'em. Build 'em. To build it.

WN: So, how did it work? How did a rock crusher in those days work?

WT: The woodwork is the bunkers. You know what I mean? Where you have built this framework. Well, a holding place for your rock. You see, you get this bunkers there. Four different sections in there. So, you get the big size rock, they go right through. Then, you have one bunker for that, and you have the other smaller there. Maybe about four different kinds. Then, you have the fines for the finishing. After you build the bunkers, then they have this screens on top.

Have this, well, I guess it's a carrier, where you have the crushers down here. Great big jaw down there where you throw your rocks in. The rock may be about around anywhere from 12 to 14 inches. All handwork, those days. No such thing as machinery. Everything, you sledgehammer, break the rocks, and throw 'em in there. This jaw, run by a tractor, or you have one of those gasoline engine. They have a pulley on it. The shaft there would pull it and just turn this screen, with all these gears. They turn 'em on, this thing will just revolve, turn over. And it just go around with the screens on top, they're different sizes. So, the big ones, they would go right through till they come to the last tail end, you see. The big ones drop down there; the small ones, all the dust comes out first and this fines and all that. Well, there's about four, five different size of rock that goes through. So, they all separated in this bunker.

They have chutes, too, where they come out and fill up. Then, they have a gateway under all these bins, under these compartments. So, you drive your truck under there and pull one of these trap doors open, fill your truck, and off you go. And keep filling up. Of course, today, they have all different size crushers, and they get all the power you want. They got a big motor all run by electricity.

You turn 'em on, it goes fast. You can grind--oh, in one day--probably, you grind a hundred yards of rock. Those days, you grind ten yards one day, well, that's doing good.

WN: Ten yards?

WT: Yeah, maybe about ten yards, that's about all you go. Then, the labor. Today, you have everything all machinery. You take your rock, and you have a big ten-yard truck come over there, load 'em up. He go, and he dump 'em, spread 'em all out. They have these graders come there, and they just push 'em all where you want 'em. But those days, it's all hand. You go there with a rake, and they dump 'em in piles. You go there and knock 'em over, and spread 'em out. There were pretty near all by eyesight, you know. Of course, the roads were narrow, too. Maybe eight feet of pave, and then you get three feet shoulders, each side. But, I guess, that's the way you get along.

WN: Did you know Mr. Yates before you started?

WT: Yeah. I met him, yeah. Even before I worked with Jim Lewis, I knew who he was. He was a politician. Then, when I worked with Jim Lewis, Yates was a [county] supervisor. They let out all these contracts, so that's how we got kind of acquainted. He comes around the job sometimes. Those days, the supervisor, he's all around. It's a full-time job. You out on the road, and people calling you up. There's a rock on the road or something like that. You know, cow probably on the road. They don't call the owner, they call the supervisor. (Chuckles)

Those days, there were no fences around. Cattle all over the road. Horses on the road. They had the right. You hit a cow, by gosh, the automobile is wrong. Over here, you go to Parker Ranch, you have to open gates to go through the main road. There's a sign on there, too. You close the gate after you go through. If you don't close the gates, they get your number. Next time, you never go through there. (Chuckles)

WN: This is when you're driving?

WT: Yeah, when you're driving a car going through there. Well, of course, very few cars in those days. So, they go Hilo, maybe. Maybe two cars in a week, three cars that go through, that's about all. People, they don't travel. The roads are so bad. How you're going to get there? Take you four days to get to Hilo.

WN: What kind of a man was Julian Yates?

WT: Well, I say, if you get along with him, you on his side, he's a hell of a good guy. But if you cross him up, you better catch the first boat and get the hell out of here. (Chuckles) No, he was a nice guy. He always see that the people are taken care of. But

there was not much. I think, probably, maybe only had a million dollars to run the whole county. That's why, people say, "By gosh, before, we all get jobs," and all that kind of stuff. Well, those days, you hired 'em. They're all per diem workers. When there's money, you got job. No money, you're all laid off, eh? But they want to make sure during the election time, you get some job. Cut grass on the side of the road or go there with a pick and shovel, widen those shoulders up or something. Then, holidays, Christmas, they give you a little work. Before the holidays, they see that you get little bit money for the holidays.

In those days, even during my time, every two years you run for reelection. So, when they wanted to change--I was on the board--when they wanted to change to four years, like what they have today, I was against it. Because four years, if there's some guy you want to get rid of, he's no good in there, well, you got to wait four years, eh? And you got to wait every four years before they fix your road. (Chuckles) Pukas in the road and all that, tell 'em. They say, "We're going to do it." That's all they tell you, but they never do it till election year. Then they fix that. But every two years, not too long, you see. You can get along every two years.

But Julian Yates, he never got defeated. He ran for every office and he always got elected. He was a good man as far as trying to help the people. There was a lot of people that don't like 'em, too. When he went away, he. . . . Well, he made only \$100 a month. That's all you get. But he was in insurance. Insurance salesman. He made money selling. That's how he made his living--selling insurance and other little things like that. He had a hard life. There were no easy life, those days.

WN: Where is he from? Where was he born and raised?

WT: I think he was born and raised in Ka'u. His parents come from Ka'u. Well, he came here, got established here. He was quite a guy. He was in the insurance, and I think he was selling--not the first time, beginning, but after a while when I got here--he was selling those little radios when the radios first come in here. You put a aerial up. So, I used to go help them put the aerials. Make a few bucks here and a few there. He was quite a fisherman. He likes fishing, too. They got out, fish, not for commerical but just for home use.

WN: Where was his source of power? What districts did he get a lot of votes from?

WT: Well, home here, you see? This Kona here. Those days, you only run from the West Hawaii, that's from Kohala to Ka'u. You don't go on east side, you run from this side. So, he got his votes from Waimea--Parker Ranch, they controlled over there. In those days, there were not too many voters, those days. When he first started,

only the men voted. Women never vote at that time.

WN: How come?

WT: Well, I don't know. When they started getting more civilized, I guess, then they say equal rights, eh? (Chuckles) Yeah, the women never voted before, only men. I forget, I don't know what year now, but anyway they started to. Then, the women never worked in no department. Only men go out work. When you get married, you know what the minister tell you. Well, you the boss of the house. Wahine, she's the boss in the house. Outside the house, the man supposed to be boss. He provides the food and all that. So, you don't bring food home, you don't come in the house. You stay out. (Chuckles)

My honest opinion about this, they having so much problems now with the kids and all that. It's because the mothers all go to work, and nobody care for the kids. They got a big family, the older kids try to take care the little ones. You know how much care they're going to get. No supervision and all that. That's my honest opinion about lot of these damn kids. Of course, the people who can afford, they'll get some maid or somebody like that. But most of the people here, poor people, they can't afford. They get their own kids to take care of the kids. The parents go out work. If after work they come straight home, all right. No, they hit the bar someplace, and stop along the road, and get home late. The kid don't eat properly. They don't get the proper food.

Those Prohibition days, you make your own home brew and all that. But when they start getting free with liquor and open these nightclubs and all that. If up to about 10 o'clock and you get the hell home, it's all right, but today, all night, eh? You're all right in the bar there where there's lot of noise. After you go home, get on the road, why, you're all alone over there, by gosh, you fall asleep. Hit a telephone post or someplace, wreck the car. It's all right you kill yourself, but you go kill somebody else, that's the bad part. Innocent guy driving on the road. The damn drunkard come and crack up. That's my honest opinion about it.

Then, the kids, nowadays, they don't care to work at home. They have plenty work at home they can do, but no. After they go to school in the lower grades, they come straight home. But soon as they can drive a car, that's the end of it. They never come home, do any coffee picking or anything. Then, they get out of school, they go work at some hotel. Well, then the ones that don't work, they don't have any money. They go along, they see how these other kids, the ones with money, they seem to be enjoying themselves and spending money. But this guys no more, then they go steal, eh? Knock somebody over the head. Watch that guy. By gosh, that guy parking his car. They go raid his car. Steal in the car, get something. Take his radio off, go sell the damn thing. Take 'em to pawnshop and all that. The pawnshop [owner], he don't care.

What the hell, he don't care where that come from. You get something worth \$50, you get 'em for \$10, what the hell, you going take 'em, eh?

WN: So, you were saying, Waimea was a source of strength for Julian Yates, yeah?

WT: Yeah, Waimea was. He got votes around Naalehu. They're more Hawaiians out there. Where the Hawaiians---not the Hawaiians, but I mean non-plantation--the voters, they're independent. They vote for him. But the people that work with the plantation, that's when they kind of. . . . Well, earlier part, there was no union, but they still kind of stick together. Most of the plantation was all this Filipinos, non-voters. Then, by and by, they become naturalized citizens, and that's when it got kind of tough. But was same way with me. The same people that vote for Yates, they would vote for me, too. All the old-timers. Then, you had factions here, too. You have some Democrats that's real diehard Democrats. They won't vote a Republican. Because in Yates's time, there was an open primary. You can vote either side. But when they had a closed primary, that kind of made it tough for the Republicans.

WN: When you got the county job with Mr. Yates's help, did you need his help? I mean, could you have gotten the job without his influence?

WT: Well, Yates, you see, he was the head of all the county over here. If you want a county job, you have to go to him. Well, politics, too. If they figure they can get votes out of you, you can control some votes, why, they'll hire you. You see, down at Hookena, that was kind of a Democrat precinct down there. Hookena and this area here, Honaunau. Honaunau people used to go to Hookena. They had a line. Then, they go to Napoopoo. Yates, he never got good result down in Hookena. There was a guy down there, DeMello, Portuguese guy. He's kinda loudmouthed guy, and he talk and he speak good Hawaiian. The Hawaiians kinda leaned towards him. He makes all kinds of promises and all that. But he ran for office, too. He'd try to buck Julian. So, Julian never got the votes down here that he expected to get. When I came in, you see, I married a sheriff's granddaughter down here.

WN: Whose granddaughter?

WT: The sheriff of. . . . Well, they had district sheriffs. Every district had a sheriff. The old sheriff, he was kinda powerful in politics, too. Maybe that's the reason why they gave me the job, too. Because the high sheriffs used to get elected by the people around the island. All the islands. Every island had a sheriff. And he have to run for election. So, you want to get elected, you got to pick somebody that going to back you up and get some power. So, this old man, he had the power. He was kind of a religious old guy, so the Hawaiians kind of leaned towards him. So, when I got married down here, that's when the politicians, they figure they

can kind of get me interested and kind of get around the old man and get the votes, eh? Of course, my wife, she was quite a politician, too. That's one reason why the county, I think, they figured they'd pick me up. You figure, cowboy, what the hell he going to give him one (chuckles) school job? But that's the way it worked. But one thing, I worked my way up. I figure, well, anywhere I can make a few bucks here and there, the work never ends. As long as there was daylight, I worked. Then, work with the county and I had my own. . . . I raised a few pigs, some chickens, and plant some taro. I worked from night to night. I made out all right.

As I say, when I was working with Jim Lewis, he had this contract. There was no running water here. Everything was all your rainwater. You build tanks. So, I learned how to build tanks and all that stuff. The only running water toilets was the school cottages. You know, the schoolteachers, you see, they get that. But outside the school and all that, all outside privy. So, when they have a school cottage job, they bring a plumber from Hilo. The old plumber, he comes over. After my job, 2:30 [p.m.] and pau from the county, I go around where the old plumber work. I talk with him and ask him, "You need some help?" This big, fat guy, he can hardly stand. He'd always sit down. I said, "I'll give a hand, work for nothing." I go over there, and he teach me how to caulk the pipe. Those days, was not this kind plastic pipe. Was all cast iron. You caulk with lead. So, I worked with him. Worked till you can't see. They had contract jobs, too. They don't care, as long as they. . . . So, every time he'd come over, I go there, learn with him. And I learned plumbing from him.

Then, after I got in with the county, there was a ad in the paper. They had, what you call? Not a class, but they wanted more plumbers out. You take the exam and all that. So, I went to Hilo and take my exam. The first thing they ask you, "Did this kind of work before?"

"Yeah."

"Who you work with?"

Tell 'em, "Work with Joe Neves."

"How long you work with him?"

I said, "About one year. Maybe little over a year."

Well, not the whole year, just part-time, eh? So, they gave me these questions to answer and all that. I passed. I got my license.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WT: That was a long time ago, I got license. My number was number 12. So, you can figure. Now, they get 'em in the thousands. Number 12. We got statehood, then everything went over to the state, not the county anymore. You get the license from Honolulu now. So, they changed mine from number 12. I just happen to have it. The other night, we were talking about. . . . One of these guys who came here the other day, he's a plumber from Oregon. So, he was talking about his job and all that. I said, "I have one of those certificates, too." (WT takes out certificate from pocket.)

WN: This "Board of Electricians and Plumbers Master Plumber License."

WT: Cowboy plumber.

(Laughter)

WT: So, I say, I did every kind of work. You see my certificate up there, eh? (WT points to mock certificate on wall.) (Laughs)
Cowboy engineer.

WN: Oh, "University of Pahoehoe Certificate of Cowboy Engineering"?

(Laughter)

WT: Yeah, that there. These guys come over the other night, they look at that. They laugh like the dickens. What the devil I have that thing for? So, I told 'em, "That's a long story to tell you."

WN: While you were working for the county, did you help with any kind of campaigning or any kind of political work?

WT: Yeah. I helped. Down here, I used to campaign for Julian Yates. Well, I say campaign, but you just go meet the people. Friends and other people, I go out and tell 'em--there was other candidates running--I said, "Just compare the qualifications of this guy here and that one. Julian Yates, he's been long time." And I say, "Every time we get little money, he distribute the money to the different places. Wherever they need it the most, he put the money there." I said, "Of course, lot of you people, you probably don't get a job from the county, then you get huhū. I don't care who you put in, they're going to be the same thing. They can promise you they going to give you all that, but there's six other [supervisors] in there, too, you know. You only one vote. Every district supervisor wants his cut. And all the money, this is the tax money that you put in. Whatever you contribute in taxes, that's where they come back to your district."

So, South Kona, we were kinda lucky. South Kona got more money than North, and I think North had a bigger population. But, you see, the tax office was in South Kona. So, the North people, they

come over here and pay taxes. So, get your post office or wherever you pay your taxes, they register that you paid tax in South Kona. (Laughs) You see? That's how it worked out. Then, after a while, then the thing didn't work out. People used to kick, so they had two districts. So, your North Kona paid taxes down in Kailua, then the South Kona people paid here.

But, yeah, I did a little politics. Then, when Julian went away, they got Jack Greenwell to fill his unexpired term.

WN: This was when?

WT: That was in. . . . What the hell is it, now? [Nineteen] forty, I think.

WN: Nineteen forty?

WT: No, no. Little before '40. Could be around '38, I think. Because Jack served about 2-1/2 years.

WN: So, in '38, where did Mr. Yates go?

WT: He went with the Hawaiian Homes. The office is in Honolulu, but that's for Molokai. Molokai and this Waimea. You know, that rehabilitation. Molokai had pineapple, Hawaiian homesteads. So, he was--well, I don't know what they call 'em--executive officer there, whatever he was. Anyway, the head. He worked there many years. He retired, I think, from that job and probably got a little pension. Then, he came back here and he ran for the Senate, and he got elected. People never forget him.

WN: State Senate, yeah?

WT: Yeah, yeah. He ran; he got elected. That was how he moved out of here. Because that was a good-paying job, eh? You get up his age, my gosh, he still had lot of young kids going to school and all that. Well, that's when Jack come in. He served the unexpired term, then he ran one term. I went out and help him get elected. After he got in, then just about few days before the nomination closed, then we heard he wasn't running for reelection.

WN: This 1942, eh?

WT: Yeah. Well, he had somebody else groomed for that job. That's when all these farmers here, they come and see me. They want me to run. They had Ushiroda. He was a sheriff up here then.

WN: Ushiroda?

WT: Yeah, Ushiroda. He was a deputy sheriff over here. And things were getting kind of bad that time. That's '42. When the war? It was '41, eh?

WN: [Nineteen] forty-one.

WT: Yeah. So, the farmers here, they figure, if they get this new guy to run, he's from Holualoa. Portuguese guy. They won't get their. . . . You know, they would have a hard time. This guy would be kind of strict with them and all that kind of stuff. I think that was their reason why they wanted to put me in. I figured I wasn't the man for that job. Not my line. I'm a outside man and go running for something like that that I'm not brought up on, not trained for that. But I couldn't help. They got the papers all out. They went out to circle [i.e., circulate] my nomination papers. All they asked me, to put my signature on it.

Up to the last minute, I said, "Well, anyway, all right, I'll run on one condition. You folks work for me in Kona, and I go outside." Because those days was blackout. You couldn't go nighttime. I went to Parker Ranch to see the people there. And then, I went to Kohala, and I went to Ka'u. Ka'u, I knew quite a lot of people there because I used to work over there, too. County work at the school. Anybody connected with the school, they know me. So, I got the votes. I got elected outright. Those days, [if] you get over the majority, you get elected in the primary.

WN: How many supervisors were elected from this West Hawaii area?

WT: Three.

WN: And was it staggered, or you folks all three . . .

WT: All the same time, yeah. Every two years. They had, every district. They say, well, three from this district. One, Kohala, over here. . . . Well, during Julian Yates's time, they had 'em fixed up pretty good. Julian Yates, he's from South Kona. Then, they have Frank Greenwell from North Kona. Then, over in Kohala, they had a guy, Sam Woods. And Ka'u never had any, because they figure Ka'u is close to Hilo. The mayor, or chairman of the board, was from Ka'u anyway, so they took care that. So, they worked it out fine. As years went by, then by and by, people from the same district, more people running. Once in a while, Ka'u get in, then they get out, then they come in. But Kohala always had a supervisor there. When I came on the picture, that's when they had [labor] unions and all that kind. One or two years there, we had three supervisors from Kona. No more, the other districts.

WN: So, they didn't have any supervisor representing Kohala or anything like that?

WT: There was one or two terms they never have. Well, we take care of that, you know. Whoever's close by. Like I used to go to Kohala. I go to Ka'u, too. When I was on the board there, the Parker Ranch, they always called me up. They never consult their Kohala supervisor. They figure they get more out of me than they can get

from their own. You see, Parker Ranch, no more union there. Farmers and the ranch. So, the ranch used to help me; the farmers help me. So, they figured I was their supervisor, so they called me all the time.

WN: But they couldn't vote for you, though, eh?

WT: They vote.

WN: They could vote for you?

WT: Yeah, yeah.

WN: How come if you representing Kona?

WT: Well, those days, no. You represent West Hawaii. You run from West Hawaii.

WN: Oh, so that's the differences between your time and Julian Yates's time?

WT: No, no difference. No difference. Was same.

WN: Oh, you just get elected at large from West Hawaii, and then whoever lives closer to you, say Kohala, you represent them?

WT: Yeah, yeah. That's right. Yeah. But even the one you have, we all kind of work together. If somebody from Ka'u called me up, I'll call back. I say, "Hey, Yoshida, this guy call me up. Why don't you take care that job over there."

He say, "Who called you?"

I tell 'em. Well, I go over there, talk to them. I say, "You people, you have your own supervisor here." I'll help him, whatever it is. If he needs some money, when you go to the board, you introduce a resolution for some money or make a motion on the board; you got to get the votes, eh? You get four votes, well, you're all right. You got to give and take, eh? Of course, Hilo, they always kind of greedy. They always want to take everything. They don't want to give the country [areas] nothing. They don't get votes from this side, you see? Of course, I always got along with the chairman. Whether he was a Republican or Democrat, I got along with him. I figure, he's the boss. Get along with him, and you probably get his vote.

WN: So, when you ran in '42, you got elected for the first time. Did you have any difficulties adjusting to this type of work?

WT: No, I got in there first time. I got around and kind of learned what they have to do, all the procedures and all that, but didn't take me long. I went along with the chairman of the board. Then,

the finance chairman, Mr. Cunningham, he was a hard guy to get along with. You see, he and Julian Yates. . . . Well, Julian was the watchdog over here, and Cunningham on that side. These two guys, they never see eye to eye all the time. Well, I figured, Cunningham was a Democrat and I was a Republican. The mayor was a Republican, so. And they had Sakai from Kohala. He was a Democrat. But I got along with them. When I want something for my district, I go to the mayor. I say, "We want this road done," or something like that.

"Well, you go see Cunningham. He's the finance chairman." You see?

So, I go to Cunningham and I tell him. He said, "Why, sure. We'll give you some money for that. You go talk with the auditor."

Those days, the auditor, he's the guy that, if have money, he know where the money going to come from and all that. So, you go talk with him and all that. Well, I made friends with all those guys. So, I never had no trouble at all whenever we need some money here. Of course, not like today. My gosh, they fight and they do everything. We had our little difference there, but after you get outside and all go eat lunch together, what the hell? You don't have to be fighting one another. (Laughs) The main thing is to get money for your district, see? Because I always felt, well, we have a two-party system, but you're elected by all the people. After you get in office there, you're not going by party. You see what you can get for your people and for your district. That's the main thing.

WN: In Kona, the main livelihoods were coffee farming and ranching?

WT: Well, ranching. There were plenty ranches, but they only hired just so many people. But coffee, if you get a good coffee field, you can't pick and your family can't pick all the coffee, so you got to hire help. There were very few Hawaiian farmers. Hawaiians plant taro. The Orientals and all them, they have coffee fields. That was before the Filipinos come in. So, the Filipinos from the plantation, they come over, pick coffee, too.

The Hawaiians, they go pick coffee. So, they made their living by picking coffee and go out and do other. . . . Fish. Most Hawaiians will fish. But still, the only way you can sell your fish is dry it. And when the steamship come in, then you ship it to Honolulu, go to some of those Chinese stores down there, market, whatever it is. But over here, everybody have their own food. They plant their own taro. They go fish. Every weekend, they go out, fish. And the hunter, he go out and catch a wild pig somewhere. Pigs all over the place. Nobody stop you from hunting. And they'd go. They get their limit. They just go out and shoot one. They say, well, that's enough for them. There was no iceboxes those days. You can preserve your stuff. Everything was salt. Got a big pig, you salt it--dry it up, salt, smoke 'em or something.

WN: Do you feel you got the support of the majority of coffee farmers in Kona?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Hundred percent.

WN: What kind of things did you promise them or what kind of things did they want?

WT: I tell you. I have my card out. I say, "Deeds, no promises." (Chuckles) Well, they come to me. I ask 'em, "What you folks want? What you want me to do?" The main thing was roads, you see? School--get a better school for their children and see that they have everything. Then, the roads. Those days, there are not too many cars and all gravel roads. You get some men go there, and they scrape the bigger rocks off the road and put in some gravel or something like that. Keeps the roads in good shape. That's about all you can do.

Then, the farmer, well, not much a farmer wants. The main thing, they say, long as they get their crops off or whatever else. They never ask for too much. Some of 'em want recreational baseball field and all that kind of stuff. But as years went by, then there was more. You get the schools. Like this school used to be way the hell down in the jungles down there.

WN: Honaunau School?

WT: Honaunau School. And I was the one who moved this school here. Got the school come here. I tried many years to get 'em up here, but the people. . . . The ma uka people wanted the school. The ma kai people wanted the school down below. I said, "We move it up there where there's more activities up in here [i.e., ma uka]. The weather is better up here. If rain, you get more water here." There were no running. . . . The way they had it down there, they had tanks but no rain. How you going fill the tank? So, up here. And I said, "The kids from here, they walk all the way down there."

They [ma kai residents] said, "Well, how our kids going?"

I said, "You going get transportation. I see that you get bus all the kids up here."

They didn't kind of believe what I said. There was an ordinance passed there where any child lives outside the three-mile limit, they have to transport 'em. But the county had a bad way of measuring over there--the school department. Well, now, the old school used to be down there, so they measure straight line. They don't go around the road, eh? Then, your kids get placed in the wrong school. Like up here, you go on this main highway here. The closest school for them would be Konawaena. But they measure down. They say Napoopoo. But you go around the main highway, it's much longer. You go all around a circle. You got to come this way and

go down Napoopoo. The school used to be way down here. Then, the school people there, they had this Inaba. He was the vice-principal of the school. So, he comes there and say, "Your children have to go down there."

So, the parents, they kick about it. They say, "Why should we go there almost to Konawaena, then have to turn down and come a long ways down?"

"Well, you go this way."

I think that's the wrong way of thinking. You don't send your kids through a pasture. The parents get mad, eh? Then they send their kids to some private school like that. I don't blame 'em. Even this last election. That's why Inaba got defeated. Some of the people still think about that. The Japanese people there. I know there's one up here. I was right there that night there, and then one of Inaba's workers, a lady, came to him and say, "Kunio, you going to vote for Inaba, eh?"

Oh, right off the bat, that was fire. "Inaba?" he says. "That guy. When we wanted our children go to Konawaena, he told us go Napoopoo." He told Inaba, "Why should you measure this way, go down there? You guys going through a pasture and going through a place there. What you want? There's Filipinos down there. What, you want them rape my daughters and all that?" The closest would be Konawaena, but he wouldn't let 'em go Konawaena. So, when he ran for office, they never forget that, you know. So, those are the things.

That's why I wanted a school here, because these kids from up here go all the way down. At the time they built the [former] school, that was all right. That was the right time, because the jobs were all down there. Everything's down--the church was down there, and they have the school, and they had tobacco company here. They used to plant tobacco here. And all the workers were down there, huh? Population was there. And lot of people down the beach, and that was the closest [school] for them. But as years went by, they put the main highway here. The people moved up. The churches all come up here. Why should they have that school down there? Even the supervisors and principals, they come here visit every so often. They don't want to drive their cars down that place there. No road to go down. So, what do you have? You don't have any new teachers. You got the same old teachers year in and year out. For the last 30 years, the same teachers. The kids, they had nothing new about it. You know, that's the way I felt then. Say, "We move 'em up here." Oh, had a bad time to get this school up here. So, Madame Pele came along, and shook one night, and knocked the school down. (Chuckles)

WN: Which school?

WT: Honaunau School.

WN: In Napoopoo?

WT: Napoopoo, Honaunau. So, then, I said, "That's the time for me to move 'em up now." I went to the board and made a motion there that we move the school up to the main highway up here. They said, "We'll get a public hearing." Then, they get a hearing. Oh, they voted. They want it back down there. Rebuild down there. Oh, I fought them. Oh, we had a bad time. The other supervisors, they backed these other people because the vote's there, you see? There were strong voters down here. But I said, "No, no. I'm not going along. I don't care how much votes down there. Even if I lose a election, that's all right. I'm not going to. We got to have a school here."

So, anyway, I called for a meeting. But I made sure I got everybody from up here, all from up here. Meetings, they [usually] come special on a Saturday to meet. Well, Saturday, you get all the beach people, all the people down there. There's quite a lot of 'em. So, I made 'em on a regular weekday. Lot of people go to work and all that. So, we got enough votes to outvote them and move up here.

Okay, then the next thing is, "Where you going put 'em up here?" Little further down here, another half mile over here, there was a nice vacant lot there. That's where the darn people come in again. A guy had a piece of land there. One with Bishop Estate leasehold, and another guy, Sam Liao, he had his real estate property. Well, the people there, they said, "Over there." It was kind of busy there. They had couple of stores over there, and they wanted it there. Well, you see, the kids go there and buy. So, then, this Martin Pence. He was a county attorney here that time. I think he's a judge in Honolulu now, federal judge. He come to me. He said, "Say Willie, you folks want that land there. This guy got a lease. That's a leasehold. The guy, Correa, you folks got to pay 'em for that. Buy his lease out."

I said, "We're going to do that. We take care of that."

Then, this Sam Liao, he comes there. When the county take over, then they want to boost the thing [price] up, you know? I said, "You don't do that. You got to get a appraiser come down. What they selling land there, the prevailing price, that's what you're going to get."

Well, Martin Pence, he was for the almighty dollar. He didn't care how we going to do it. He worked for the county, but he wasn't helping the county one bit. He was helping himself. So, meantime, I say, "Yeah, okay. We take care that." And I come over to see my friend, old John Deniz. He used to own all this land around here. I said, "John, we want to move the school up here. We going have a

school. What do you think? Where's a good place for the school."

He said, "I give 'em all the land they want. How many acres you want? I give 'em free."

I said, "No, no. We don't want no land free. We pay for the land."

He said, "I tell you. If that's the case, you see that stone wall going up here?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Anything on the south of that stone wall. From the road up, take any amount."

I said, "Okay, John. How much? What are you selling land here [for]? Five hundred dollars an acre?" I said, "I'll get the surveyor come over here. We'll get the engineer come here and survey 'em. You tell 'em what land you want [surveyed]. But I don't think they want more than 10 or 12 acres, whatever it is."

"Okay," he said, "\$500 an acre."

I said, "You put down \$600." He was selling \$500 to these other farmers around here, but the county, try for \$600. If they buy the other land over there, they probably have to pay \$2,000. Then I get everything all set. Then, I go to the board. I call up the supervising principal, De Silva. And I say, "We going to have trouble. These guys want too much money for their land. By the time you go to court, have all that thing worked out, it'd be next year." I say, "I can get a piece of land here. We can start tomorrow."

"Where's that piece?"

I said, "It's couple thousand feet from the other location." I said, "You come over."

So, he comes over. He bring his assistant--vice-principal or whatever it is. Superintendent of schools. So, they come over here. We had a bulldozer up here, and I cleared off a little spot down here. He come here, look around. He said, "Where's that other place?"

I said, "It's down the other side there, but it's kind of in a dip. This is right up on a hill here."

But it's all overgrown, eh? All trees in here, forest. So, the lady, she walk around there and all that. She pick up a old charcoal iron. You know those old--I don't know whether you know the charcoal iron, where they have a handle to it. Well, there was part of it,

just the top. She grabbed it. Had an old charcoal iron. She said, "You know, when I was a kid, I used to use one of these things. I wonder, can I take this home for souvenir?"

"Take it."

Look around, and she said, "Ernie, this is a nice place." Well, he was kind of little hard head, too. He wanted to go along with the other people. So, look around a little more. She said, "My dad had a 'ōkolehao place over here. They used to make 'ōkolehao before."

I said, "The house was right over there. Just a few feet from here. About a hundred yards from here. Not quite hundred. Well, anyway, over there, the house burned down. Some people living there, and the kids got careless, they burned the house down."

She look around. She said, "That's right. Maybe this the same old iron I used to use." You know, the handle.

Well, we're talking. I said, "Over there, they used to plant this vanilla plant."

And she said, "That's right. That was my dad's business. Ernie, you put the school here." That's all she said--"Put the school." That's how the school got there.

WN: Right at this location?

WT: Yeah, right, location here. That's how we got the school there. When we put the school, the people, they were still mad with me because moved up here. The only reason had to go down there, they had baseball ground and all that kind. I said, "You forget about it. Up here, we're going to have patent toilets. We'll have everything up here." Well, and the water. I said, "I see you get the water." We put two big tanks up here, two 50,000-gallon tanks up there. Steel tanks. We got 'em for nothing. I knew where to get 'em. They were old surplus tanks.

WN: What year was this?

WT: That was in what? [Nineteen] sixty or '61, something like that.

WN: How did the people down Napoopoo feel?

WT: Honaunau? Well, at first, they never---but after the school went up, they all agreed that we get the right location. Then, the kids, we got transportation for 'em. Now they don't have to walk. They all ride on the bus. They get more activities up here. Build a school, build everything. Even the old principal, he was kind of against me for putting the school up here. Down below, he can loaf a little more, eh? (Laughs) Down in the jungle, nobody comes

visit him. He liked golf. He was the first guy in Kona here to handle and show people the golf clubs and all that kind. Anything about golfing. Well, he get out there one whole period and just putt around there with his golf clubs and all that. But after a while, he found out that this was the place for his school. Today, they're very happy about it.

WN: What about the Kona coffee school schedule?

WT: You see, how they got that, you have to have the school kids pick coffee, eh? That's the only way they can help the parents, by picking coffee. So, if you stay home from school, you lose that much education. I guess they entered a resolution or whatever you call it. Anyway, they got their school to change the time. So, your school vacation in June, eh? Well, in June, that's when you're picking coffee. Maybe June, eh?

WN: No.

WT: No, no. That was vacation. Oh, yeah. Then, you go back when? In August? September?

WN: We [normally] go back September.

WT: Anyway, the peak season is right when the school go back. So, they change it so that they have their Kona schedule on a coffee harvest time. Well, it worked out all right like that. Then, the teachers, they want to go summer school or something like that. So, they exchange. They have other teachers come in and take their place, eh? Of course, I guess extra pay, too. It worked out all right until after a while. Then, the coffee kind of faded out. All the new teachers, they didn't like teaching when all the other teachers have a rest, and they working. Then, they changed back to the regular. Then, the weather kind of changed too. Not much coffee. The season kind of different, too. So, that's how they got the schools like that.

WN: So, about in the '60s, they changed back to the regular schedule, yeah?

WT: Yeah, I think so. I think around that.

WN: Was there any kind of controversy or arguments when they were trying to decide whether to take out that special school schedule?

WT: Some of the farmers did, but the teachers, well, they went by the teachers. Most of the teachers voted to go on the regular school schedule.

WN: Going back little bit, you said you didn't get much [political] support from the plantations?

WT: Yeah.

WN: Was it mainly because of the union coming up?

WT: That's right, the union. The reason for that, because I never go along with a lot of the things they asked for. I'll give you a good example. You know, they play their politics, too. They go to the chairman of the Board [of Supervisors] or whoever the people that control. . . . What do you call this? That hire the workers. A guy, probably, he's in one department. He want to get promoted or he want to shift. So, the guy apply for a job. We'll say janitor, groundskeeper. Well, the guy, he goes there and he take exam and all that. The guy, he passes his exam. All right. Then, he's maybe from some other locality, not from here, and he passes. Then, he get his job. He goes there; he work couple days or little while. Then, the union come out, and another guy that's very close to the union, he say, "By gosh, I applied for that job. I never got that job." So, the darn union, they come along, and they want to make a exchange. Kick this guy out and put somebody else in there, or give him some other job, something he never applied for.

Then, I get a note on my desk there. "Will you support this guy here," and all that kind of stuff. I tell 'em. "No," I said, "I don't do that kind of stuff." If a guy, he passes his exam, or the head of the department picks, out of the five applicants to come in, he picks the top [of the] five, and he put 'em in there. Well, what more you want? This guy is number five here, on the bottom. You want put him up there, while this guy is number one already. The guy figure, if he's number one, I give the job, eh? And that's the kind of stuff they pull off. I never go along with 'em.

There was one case, especially. That guy, Shigeoka, was the head of the department in there. He hired some guy there. This guy was working for some contractor, but he felt he wanted some county job, where you get, in the long run, benefits after so many years. And he lives right down there. He got this job there. This particular job was a caretaker for Rainbow Falls. Okay, the guy go there, he work four days. Then, the union people come to--Epstein was one of 'em--they come to this Shigeoka and they tell 'em, "Say, how come you hire that guy?"

"Well, he was the top. In the five people, he was number one."

"You folks should have seen me first and see some of them. I think this guy is more capable for the job," or something like that.

He had a job down Laupahoehoe somewhere. They want to bring him closer to town. He wasn't without a job. He had a job, but he wanted to get closer in, so he applied. They put Shigeoka on the spot, and they brought him. They come to the board. Well, these other supervisors over there, they agreed with them [i.e., the union]. And the poor guy, he was kind of new in that department.

That was, you know, he take care the parks and recreation. So, I listened to him. And finally, I got up. I asked him, "Shigeoka, when you hired this guy here? How many days now?"

Oh, whatever it is, About a week.

"When they come, what they tell you?"

He said, "They never tell me to fire 'em, but they told me take this guy and put him down Laupahoehoe, and exchange the jobs."

I said, "You going to do it?"

He said, "Well, the other guy don't want to go. He's right here. Why should he go down there?"

I said, "Okay. You have work. You go tend to your work. I take care this." So, I went after those guys. "By gosh," I said, "you know, the trouble with you supervisors, you look at Epstein sitting over there, and you can't go the other way. Deep in you, you don't want to make this change. But just because the head of the union over here, by gosh, you want to get along with him, eh? Just to be on their side." I said, "I don't work that way." I said, "If this man is already hired, he work there, and if he's qualified for the job, why should you go change 'em? Let that other guy. Let him find his way somewhere else. But they should have changed him before they hired this other guy. They should have made a application for Laupahoehoe. That guy come here, then you get somebody. But no wait till he's hired for this job, then you go move him around. That's not right." I said, "No, I disagree with you guys."

Anyway, they couldn't help. I had a good point there, you see? Well, that was one reason why the union, they said, I never go along with 'em, whenever something else come up. Things like that. But I say, "If you folks are right, I go along with you. But why the devil should I go just siding with you guys for something I know is wrong? My conscience bother me all my life if I do a thing like that to a poor guy." They couldn't get me, you know, pull me around. That's why, they don't like me, because I tell 'em straight. I got defeated couple times by a few votes. One time, I lost by five votes, another time by 10 or 15. Two years later, I run, I get in again.

Of course, maybe other reason, I was a Republican, and they all Democrats. Many times, they come to me, want me to change. I said, "No, I don't change parties."

WN: You said, in '68, you ran as a Democrat?

WT: Yeah, I ran. Not because---I knew I wouldn't get elected. I was running around the island. This guy who was running for the office, we could have both got elected. I told this guy, "You go

run for Hilo, because you're a Hilo boy. You're not from Kona; you're from Hilo." And this haole group up here, instead of backing me up, they wen back this other guy up. I beat him one time, then after that, he beat me. So, he figure, anybody they put in going to get elected. So, I said, "If I run on a Republican ticket again, I can't go out and buck the guy." If I run opposite party. . . . The Democrats, they never accept me anyway. But I told the Democrat candidate from here. I said, "You're running for an office. I'm going to run for the same office. I make one proposition. If I get nominated, will you back me up?" Well, he look at me. I said, "I tell you. . . ."

END OF SIDE TWO

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WN: So, you said you're going to back him up?

WT: I told him, "If you get the nomination, I back you up." So, we shook hands on that. He got nominated. So, I went out, campaigned for him, and he won. The Republicans stayed home. And that was the only reason why I. . . . I was satisfied. But if, by gosh, your own party members, they don't want to back you up, so, as I told you. . . . But I'm still a Republican. I just signed up that time as a Democrat just to. . . .

WN: Was putting in the county water system in Kona a big issue for you?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, long before water came in, I used to campaign. I said, "One thing, I'm going to see that you get water here." I said, "Everywhere else have water. We have water here, but the thing is, to bring 'em out." Well, the people, they kind of laughed at me. They kind of think, "What the hell's the matter with this guy? He's nuts or what?" But I know, because I dig wells around here. My own. I have a cattle ranch down here. I have three wells down here. And when I was with McCandless, we dug wells there. It's brackish [water], but it's all right. You can use that. If you can't drink it, you use it for something else. There's washing. Everybody wash their own clothes and all that kind of stuff. They go all the way to Waimea, go to Ka'u, buy 5,000 gallons of water. It was \$60 a load to bring 'em in. So, how long you're going to last?

Well, when the time was kind of ripe, everything. . . . This Governor [William F.] Quinn was elected governor. I knew him before that. I told him, "Governor, in Kona here, we need water. That's what we need." I said, "I can take you down. I have a well down here. There's couple wells here and over the other side there on the McCandless [Ranch]." I said, "We drink that water. Every time we working down there, we just go there. The nice, cold water." When

it's cold, just come out of the well, it's all right. But if it's warm, then they get kind of flat and taste kind of brackish. But other than that, it's all right. I said, "Then, there's water up in the hills here. Plenty water up in this reserve up here." I said, "But the surface water, you can't depend on that. Because when it rains, you get water. No rain, no water. Same thing, eh? Got to pay lot of money. But if you tunneled in here, you get water. Guarantee. Water in this mountain." But got to spend lot of money. But you drill a well down here, those days, maybe \$10,000, you get water--you get a well. The governor knew there was a . . . He come up here during dry time. In fact, they were hauling water with a barge. Brought water from Honolulu first time. So, he come up. And I took him out, showed him around here.

Then, Lester Marks, he used to be my boss. And he know I know all these water holes and all that. I dug water for them down there. Then, he went to the governor. He told the governor to send the water man to see me. So, this guy, Bob something--I don't know, forget his name--he comes up. He call me up. He's going to come up here, can I help? So, I said, "Yeah, I'll meet you." So, on the plan, they said they going to dig well. You know, they study the island, but they were going to dig a well down there in Napoopoo. We went down, look at it. I say, "I've been fooling around wells, my own, in a small way. You go down there now, you want to go between 700 and 800 feet. The ocean comes way up in that bay, Napoopoo Bay. From the ocean, it climbs right up. And then, you'll be very close to the ocean when you at 700 feet, eh? But if you go further out here, I'll take you out. I have a well dug below. I went 44 feet, and I got fresh water, almost fresh. We drink the water and for the cattle." And I took 'em down. I said, "I sent some of that water to Bill Chun to test the water, and he told me was drinkable. You could drink that water."

WN: Who told you?

WT: Bill Chun. He was a water engineer over here for the county. Anyway, I told Governor Quinn this. He sent his man up here. I know he was Bob something, not Fukuda but something like that. So, we went. I said, "Now, you go with me." So, we took him back. I come back on the road and come over here. I said, "Now, you look here. We're miles away from the ocean. But the land low." We have those altimeters. I think rise about 700 feet or something like that. I said, "You see that point out there? Ke'ei? Way out. By the time you're inland, you're miles away from the ocean to get this here to 700 [feet]. But the other side, they only half mile up. You already 700 feet. You dig here, and this vein, it goes straight down to where have two wells down below. And both wells are good water." So, I said, "You try over here." And by gosh, they took my word and they dug that well, and that's the water supplying the whole Kona, today.

WN: About what year was this?

WT: Let's see, what the hell year now? I don't remember.

WN: After Quinn was elected, though?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You see, Quinn started it, and I think he got defeated, whatever year that was [1962]. You see, Quinn got all these things all set up. He get water for Kona and all that stuff there. Then, he got defeated. Governor [John A.] Burns come in. So, Governor Burns got all the credit, not Quinn. When we dug this well, Quinn was governor, but after that, then they started. Before that, they never think about digging wells.

WN: That was the first time Kona had a water supply other than rain tanks?

WT: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, they started. Then, this water is connected. Then, they start digging down Keauhou and all over the place. This was the first well, Ke'ei, down here. And this water was pumped up here. Tank up in the hill. There're several tanks. Pump up here, and from here, go all the way down to Kailua. But there was no reason to pump all this water all over the place when they have over here. They drilled wells all over. There's plenty water underground. You go, guarantee there's water.

But many, many years ago, a guy came here. He was sent by the federal government. His name was Stearns. And he was kind of connected with the University of Hawaii, I think, or something. And he come here. Then, he was checking up. But they don't come way up, [they went] down near the ocean side, eh? They try to drill wells. Just tap the place. Just a small drill. The county here, Julian, he loaned me to them. Well, I went with them. This guy, Stearns, he's a real hydraulic engineer, you know. He knows his stuff. We went along the seacoast here. Wherever he drilled, he got water, but lot of that water was too salty. There was other places. Then, when he came down here, he told me, "You go way inland and low, then you get good water. And you look on the mountain," he said, "where there's kind of a low spot in the mountain there, that might have been river before. Water come down and, of course, the lava flows and all that kind of filled it up. But you look around and you follow, more than likely you'll get good water." He said he's been making a study of this. Not only here in Hawaii, in the Mainland, all over. He's kind of elderly guy. So, I kind of learned little bit from him. So, that's how they got water in Kona. They started from here.

WN: How did the farmers react to that?

WT: Well, they were happy. Don't have to pay no darn \$60 a truckload or tankload of water, eh?

WN: Did lot of farmers do that?

WT: Oh, yeah. They need water for their coffee.

WN: What about the rainwater in their tanks?

WT: That don't last too long, eh? When it rain, you fill it up. And the farmers, they don't have too many tanks. As they increase the farm, they don't increase their water supply, they just get the same. Then, they get more kids in the family and use more water. Nobody had patent toilets. They never waste no water. They wash their rice, they save that water to irrigate the plants and do something.

WN: Did you notice any changes in Kona after that water supply came in?

WT: Change in what way?

WN: Say, in agriculture . . .

WT: Yeah, well, then you see everything else. You would see the people have a better standard of living, too. They have more water. The household there, they buy washing machines. They have patent toilets. They have a vegetable garden right around their house there. And some of them have a lawn. They live better. Better everything. They get water.

And like the fire department, we never have no fire protection here. I started that here. You see, Julian Yates, he tried all that, but there was not enough money. If you have a fire, what you going have here? No more water here to fight fire, eh? They never even have a hand pump or anything like that. So, when my time [term] came, I said, by gosh, there was Kainaliu burned down and all these places. I said, if small fire, if you got a little fire wagon, you can put the fire out. Everybody looking at the hotel; looking at the big rich people. They can take care of that. I said, "Poor farmer here. Burn his house down. How he going to rebuild?" The insurance people don't even insure their place, unless you have a real decent place. You get water in the house and all that kind, probably you get insurance. Other than that, you can't, eh?

So, one day, I went to the fire department and I talked to the fire chief. I knew him pretty well. I said, "Bob, we want some kind of protection in Kona. I don't care what. Even if we get some small pump, where the county own a pickup truck to haul the pump around." Those days, we never have four-wheel drive. No more four-wheel drive, too. I said, "We don't even have one hand pump."

So, he said, "You go see the assistant. See Ah Chong."

And I said, "Okay." So I went to him. Well, the guy was happy when I went to see him. I knew Bob, the chief, more than the assistant. His name was Chong Akana. I said, "You know, we need

some kind of protection in Kona for fire. You guys, you know your business. I don't. What do you think the best thing for Kona?"

He said, "You come the right time. I have some pamphlets here, just come in about a week ago. A little jeep here. Jeep with a pumper and all that. And got a suction hose, a 20-foot suction hose. This is just right for your coffee farmers in Kona. They have water tank. Long as they have water, you throw this suction hose in the tank. You get a couple hundred feet of hose. And four-wheel drive jeep. And you can get around the coffee fields."

I said, "How much--" Before we talked that, I said, "Will you come up to the board meeting? We're having a board today. At 10 o'clock, we're going to have a meeting."

He said, "Yeah, I'll be glad."

I said, "Bring all that stuff up. I'm going to bring this up, and I'm going to make a motion to have you come up."

He said okay, so I went to the board. I told 'em right off the bat. I made a motion there. I said, "I want to see the assistant fire chief up here. Get some questions to ask." Well, at first, they didn't know what was all about. After he got there, I told 'em, "Ah Chong going to talk about some new fire wagon they got there that be just right for country places. Not necessary only Kona. Can be Kohala or someplace else."

They said okay. So, he came over here, explain everything. It was \$7,000. That's all it was, \$7,000. But, of course, then you have to buy the extras--the hose and all that kind of stuff. But the jeep itself with the pumper. So, they all agreed. Cliff Bowman, he was the finance chairman. So, I said, "Cliff, what do you think?"

"It's a good idea, but go find the money," he tell me. "You go find the money."

I said, "Yeah, I'll see [if] I can find the money."

So, everything's all pau. We had other business. Then, that afternoon, we went for lunch. Well, Harry Brown, he's the auditor. He and I, we're very good friends. And the clerk, Desha; and Sakuichi Sakai, he's from Kohala. They're supervisors like me. Well, we five guys, we always go to lunch together. Every meeting, we go for lunch. One meeting, I treat; next one, the other guy. We take care of that. We always go to lunch. We went for lunch.

I told Harry, "Harry, we want some fire protection in Kona, and I think we got the right thing. Ah Chong told me. He came to the board and he showed us this pamphlet, all this jeep and all that. The main thing now, the board all agree, but they kind of laughing

at me. They said, 'You go find the money.' So I said, 'The only way I can find the money is go see my friend Harry Brown.' So, that's why, I'm asking you now, where can we get some money for that?"

He said, "We have money. But the main thing, you have to go to the county attorney and see that bill that they passed. They had an appropriation--whether it's for the island of Hawaii or just for the city of Hilo. That appropriation. Hilo, they got what they wanted. They got what they asked for. They got a new fire engine and everything. But there's a balance of some \$9,000 in his department. If the bill reads for the island, you can get the money. But if the bill reads for Hilo proper, then that have to go back to the legislature so they change the wording."

Okay, after lunch, I go up. I go to the county attorney, Tom Okino. "Tom," I said, "there's some appropriation here, where the fire department, they bought the equipment and all that. But there's a balance there. How does that read?"

So, he look up. He got his secretary [to] check up. He said, "It's for island of Hawaii."

Okay. Island of Hawaii. I said, "Will you draw up a resolution to transfer that money to Kona for the purchase of this fire engine?"

Well, he gladly did it. I took this resolution, introduce 'em in the board. Oh, gosh, these Hilo guys, they scream, you know, because they never know this money was there. None of us knew about this money over there until I went to Harry Brown. Well, he's the auditor. He knows. Okay, they all agreed, if you get the money. So, they all voted to give us the money, buy this engine.

So, that's how we started. This one-man fire engine. One little jeep. We bring the jeep here. Meantime, my son Donald, he was working with the fire department, so he's stationed in Hilo. They got this thing all rigged up. We got all the necessary parts for it--the hose and all that. The fire chief comes over with it, and Donald comes to bring the jeep over. We went up to the Kona Meat Market there. I talked to them. I said, "We want to use some of your water here and demonstrate this thing." So, we go up there and. . . . I said, "Jack, I think we better shoot 'em on the roof so the water go back in your tank."

He said, "No, I get plenty water here. Because this little pump won't pump too much water."

So, I tell you, we pumped there. In a few minutes, we peep in the tank. The tank was just about empty. (Laughs) He say, "Stop, stop, stop!" Okay. We had the doctors, we had some ranchers, and some farmers over there. Everybody looking. They tell, "Well, by

gosh, that's the right thing for Kona." So, we went down to Kailua, throw the hose in the ocean there, right on the pier. Shoot water. Well, they all agree. Everybody who saw that, they agree. Then, went to Holualoa, up where Inaba Hotel. They had some big tanks there. We'd demonstrate. All okay. So, that was fine.

The following week, we had this here. They stationed Donald over here. Got a fire place for him and all that--station by the hospital. We go to the civic club meeting. I don't know whether it's down Kailua or up Teshima's [Restaurant]. Someplace, anyway. They went over the meeting, everything pau. Then, one guy, newcomer here. I never forget that guy. He gets up and he said, "Well, I see we get a little toy. We got a new toy in Kona here. We got a little toy engine to fight fire."

Oh, that time, burn me up. I thought, by gosh, here, I thought it was really something for Kona, and this guy gets up there. His name was Henry Hahn. He gets up. He says, "They get this little toy over here, and what can it do?"

After he got through, I got up and I said, "Mr. Hahn, you know, you just come here yesterday. I've been here all my life. And we've been wanting some kind of equipment to fight fires here for long time. Whole Kainaliu town burned down. There was nothing there to put the fire. . . . They could have let one building burn and save the rest of the town if you had something like this little engine here. But no, it's guys like you, who come here, just overnight, and you think you know all about Kona. Now, you go on record. Go make a motion here to have this thing. . . . You don't want this fire wagon here, other districts will be glad to take it over. Kohala, Waimea, or something, they'll be glad to take it over."

Boy, that Dr. Seymour, he gets up, and he went after this guy. Then, Roy Wall and all these haoles. While he was talking, this Maude Greenwell, this rich, old wahine up here, she get up, back him up, you see? She said, "Now, you get a fire engine here. You got to get some people to run it. And what they do? They sit on their fannies all day?"

Well, that's when this doctor, he got up. And he said, "When they sitting on their fannies, that's good news. That's good, because there's nobody's house burning. But when he's out, when you don't see the fireman, that's some poor guy losing his home or losing everything they get." Those days, they only pay about \$100 a month. He said, "What's that compared to your losing your home?"

Well, everything quiet. That was hot potato, you see? So, stop. Not too long after that, had a big hardware store not too far from the bank there. Right opposite the [Bank of] Hawaii. And the credit union. The credit union here, this store there, and the

bank this side of the road. The fire engine up on the hill. Two o'clock in the morning, big fire. So, they run this fire engine down. Just from the hill, they roll right down there. Throw the hose in the tank there. He let that building burn. Too far gone already. Big hardware store. They get paints, and tires, and every damn thing in there. So, the old credit union, one old, little, dinky building. Not the one today. There's just one little, [with] 1-by-12 siding on 'em. So, he kept the hose on this building all the time while that thing was burning. Oh, was pretty hot. Meantime, only one fireman, but other people come over there. Volunteers come help. "Don, you need some help?"

Donald tell 'em, "You go up the other place, up the bank there, and bust the cover off the tank. Because this tank going to run dry pretty soon. So, we got to connect more hose. Get the wagon up there and have more hose. We got to keep that credit union."

And while, the credit union, he had the hose on there, by gosh, the bank started burning right across the road. You know how the heat come up. So meantime, they get the hose on two places. I don't know whether they had two hose with a connection or not. But anyway, the pump was going. So, then they move 'em up to the next tank. Then, the banker, he comes out, and then, "Don't use my water!" That damn guy.

He said, "Well, you want your bank burn?" See, because the water is where his residence. He didn't want to use his water. Oh, the hell. These boys, they got a ax, and they chopped the top off of that thing. They throw the hose in. They saved the bank and saved the credit union. And the other guy, poor guy, he lost all. Kishi Store. So, that was the first big. . . . Then, they realized. By gosh, if it wasn't for that little engine. That's the only time they appreciated the fire engine. (Laughs)

Then, over here, they had couple other little farmers there. Their [coffee-drying] platforms burn like that. Well, that's the only wagon can get in. Four-wheel drive and drive up this narrow path. You know how the coffee fields, no paved roads, just gravel. You get one big one [truck] with the ladder and all that, what's the good of that if no water? This is big pump. One time you put the hose, in one suck, take 5,000 gallons water gone. This little engine, it pumps. Well, you had enough water to put the fire out. It helped a lot of places here. And really, from that on, we start building up more. And these guys, they don't realize how good it. . . . Anything is better than nothing. (Chuckles) So, that's some of the stuff I did around here for the people. Of course, the old-timers, they know. The young people don't know. They think, well, just another guy. But I was thinking about the people, about their needs, because I live here. I know what they need.

WN: While you were a supervisor, you did some ranching, right?

WT: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I worked for the McCandless Ranch.

WN: While you were a supervisor? Oh, you still worked for McCandless?

WT: Yeah. The supervisor, that's sort of part-time. Of course, I had a agreement with the ranch. I told them, "I work for you people under one condition, that the county job comes first, supervisor. I'm a Republican, you guys Democrats, but we don't talk politics. Politics is my business. Ranch, you tell me anything you want down there, any changes, anything, I go along with you people." So, we got along fine.

WN: How long were you at McCandless?

WT: From '42 up to 1950, I think. [Nineteen] forty-nine or '50. By that time, I started my own, too, eh?

WN: You started your own ranch. How did you get the land?

WT: I leased land here. Bishop Estate lease. I had a government lease first over the other side. I started little bit, but then I quit ranching. It was getting too much. Well, as you go along, there's more work, more work, more county. So, it wasn't fair for the ranch if I go put too much time. They didn't want me to quit. But I told 'em, "Well, you guys all right. You're on your feet now." That damn ranch was so deep in the hole that they didn't care how. . . . They couldn't get credit anywhere.

WN: Your ranch?

WT: No, that McCandless. Well, they just had poor judgment, poor management, that's all. I go to American Factors, I say I want to buy some grain. [They ask], "How you going to pay?"

"End of the month, I guess. Every 30 days, you pay the bill."

"No, no, no, no. Charge it to you, all right. But not to the ranch. They owe us so damn much money, we can't give 'em any more credit."

I go to the men's shop in Hilo, buy clothes for the boys, and stuff like that. Segawa, he tell me, "Willie, I tell you, if you buy and put it under your name, I'll give you credit, but not McCandless." He said, "They owe us so damn much money. They don't pay their bill."

I guess, maybe McCandless hired the damn guy who was running the place, this Portuguese guy, DeMello, a politician. That's the reason why they hired him. He didn't know nothing about ranching. They hired him because McCandless, himself, he wanted to be delegate to Congress and all that kind. Politics, eh? To hell with the ranch, take care the politicians.

Anyway, when I worked on the ranch, they had all the men there. They had fence men; they had guys just taking care of dogs and everything else around there. I told them, "You folks want me to work for you, I work for you under one condition, that I going to make a clean sweep around here. You don't need all this. Like one little plantation, the way how they running this place here. Why do you want all these men around here?"

Well, they had a haole guy from the Mainland come down. After this guy DeMello, he died, then they got this guy. He come here, just bluff his way, like most of these guys. I think he came down with a circus on the Mainland, so he come here. When the circus went back, he stayed here, see? I think he was taking care of the lions or something like that maybe, because he come here, all he was doing was keeping dogs. He had more dogs than cattle around there.

Anyway, they said, "Well, you do whatever, you go ahead, do it. You run the ranch. If you can put this ranch in a paying condition, all right." But they had no budget set up. I just can get whatever cattle on the place to pay for itself. I said the only way, I got to lay off a lot of these guys. So, I got up that morning. I went over there, and they turned everything over to me. I got all the men there.

I said, "Most of you men, you know me. You know how I work around. I been out of ranching for quite a while, but I tell you something. When you work for me, you start from next week Monday. You start working. But you come over there, you going to work. You not going to come over there and just smoke two bags of Durham one day and sit on your fannies and all that kind of stuff--go down Monday morning, tell the story how the big fish got away, all that. You going to work here. Next week, if any of you want to work for me, you going come here to work. If you think I'm not the kind of a boss you want, look for another job. But I'm not going to lay any of you folks off. It's up to you. If you want to work, you work. But you going to work. We're going to have fence men here, we're going to have few cowboys, we're going to have everything else. We're going to get everything all organized."

Okay, Monday morning, I go over there. Only about 15 people showed up. Twelve people. "Where's the rest of the gang?"

"Oh, I don't know. They no come work."

Okay. Well, bumbai, I meet this guy, Matsumoto. He used to brag about how he smoked two bags of Durham. Every day, he rolled. You know how much work you going do if you going to smoke two bags of Durham. So, he never showed up. (Chuckles) So, another, German guy there, he was kind of a cowboy foreman over there, before. And they had another guy. All he do is take care dogs. They go out and shoot goat, sheep. Do everything to feed dogs. They never show up.

So, I told these boys, "Now, you guys been here before. You want some of this? We got to get rid of all these dogs. We don't need all these dogs here." They all chained up all over the place. You hear barking all over the place. I said, "Go ask people. If they want the dog, they can have 'em. Take 'em. I don't want 'em. I want none of these dogs." So, anyway, somehow, we got rid of those dogs.

This foreman, supposed to be, he never showed up. But the following month, he comes up. He was out there in the corral and all that damn thing. I said, "What you doing over here?"

He said, "Well, I came back work."

I said, "Where you been this whole three weeks?"

"Oh," he said, "I went on a vacation."

A vacation. He went around all the ranches, trying to find a job, you see? I know. They called me up. They tell me. I said, "I tell you, if you came the day I told you to come, Monday, you would get a job here. But right today, there's no work here. No room for you. Sorry. We can still be friends, but don't pick it on me, because I told you when to come here. Nobody's fault. Your own fault, you didn't show up."

Then, the dog man, he went back fishing. Because he know he had no business on that ranch. He don't know nothing about ranching. I know all the guys. I said, "We got lot of fencing to do." Go out and repair fence. As I said, to become a cowboy, you got to get your degree, "PhD"--(chuckles) post hole digger, eh? So, anyway, I put 'em all on the fence. All right, work. From 30-some odd men, I had 12 men. Got along fine. No more trouble.

Then, I told 'em, "We need some equipment for clearing land and all that." So, they sent me a old junk tractor. Every 300 yards, the damn old track come off, but we put roads. I put 50 miles of road up in the mountain. We caught a lot of wild cattle. That's all they had. They had no more tame cattle. The boss they had before, he was selling young cattle, young cows, when they should be out breeding, you see? I said, "How come you selling those cows there? I'd like to buy some."

"No, no. I not selling 'em here. All go to Kohala. Go to Kahua Ranch."

WN: What ranch?

WT: Kahua. All the cattle, they go to Kahua Ranch. They didn't want to sell anything here, so I said all right. I said, "Well, how are those cows?"

He said, "Oh, those cows are makule. They're old. They have no more teeth."

Well, that guy, he didn't know beans about cattle. You see, all cows, they don't have teeth in the front part of their upper jaw. No more teeth there, see? That's why they use their tongue. The cows, they eat the grass with the tongue. You know, they use their tongue to pull the grass up. In the back, they have those grinders there, but in the front, no more. Only the front, the lower jaw, get the teeth, eh? He told me they got no more teeth.

I said, "Oh, yeah?" And he's a ranch manager. He was selling all these cattle. From the time they born, no more teeth. And until they die, no more teeth up there. They no grow teeth on the upper (chuckles) front part. Well, that's how he's selling all that. How the devil you're going to raise cattle and. . . Well, he was there for a while. I know he probably went away. He wanted to go away or something like that. Then they asked me to work for them. So, that's how I worked with them. But I worked that ranch before. When I first come here, I worked there. I trained horses for 'em. Then, they had all new people come in. New owners.

WN: Is this still in operation now?

WT: Oh, yeah. They doing all right now. They all right. They developed the land. They cleaned up more land. I put the road. That's what made them, that road I put in. Before, everything on horse. Take you all day to get up the mountain. Cost money. Then, they put more water. Before, no more water. So, they have more water system. They get this government now, they subsidize with water development and all that.

WN: So, you left McCandless in 1950 to start your own ranch?

WT: Well, yeah. [Nineteen] fifty, '51, something like that.

WN: That's the lands you have right now?

WT: Yeah, yeah.

WN: How many acres do you have?

WT: There's over 2,000 up in the hills, and there's about 600 down here, Bishop Estate. Get government land and Bishop Estate.

WN: But do you own some?

WT: Just my house lot. I don't have any pasture land of my own. All lease. You see, this lease land.

WN: And how many head of cattle do you have?

WT: I run about 300 head. This land is all poor kind of land. Down here is only good six months in a year. Like now, it's so dry. You can see how dry down here. Well, I bring the cattle down. Like this month, I supposed to take cattle if it rain. If no rain, then you can't. I get cattle up there ready to go down there. Take down there. Take about 60 head down there. I have some down there now. They're all right, but from there, they go to market. So, I take anywhere from 60 to 80 head of cattle down below. Then, they stay there. End of the year, they all go to market.

WN: So, throughout your past, you were in ranching; your plumbing or construction work; you were County Board of Supervisors. Which of the jobs in your life have you enjoyed the most?

WT: Well, I enjoyed everything. All. I like cowboying. I never quit. I still ride a horse. You know, the break, change. I guess, you stick on one thing all the time, you don't feel right maybe. Every night I watch the news. After the news, then I go sleep maybe 11, 12 o'clock every night. Six o'clock, I'm up every morning. And I never stick around the house. I go work. You think about something you have to do. Every day you get something in mind you have to do. I get so damn much work to do. I don't hire nobody. Work myself. Well, I get one boy. He work too, but weekends he don't work, so he come work with me, help. In fact, I give him half of what I make. The cattle I sell, I give him half. Then, my friends come help me. If the guys, they want to ride horse, well, all right. That's where I get all my help. Get my cattle. I have poor grazing land, very poor grazing land. All the wasteland. The good land, the big ranches get 'em anyway. All the good lands already been taken up. The early missionaries come here; they clean everything up already. Missionaries turned ranchers, too, you know. (Chuckles) I mean, all the good lands already gone. Whatever I have is kind of wasteland.

WN: What do you suppose the future of ranching is in Kona? Think it will continue?

WT: I think it will. It will. Maybe not as. . . . Well, they have a different system now. They raise cattle here, but they fatten in their feedlots. They ship all their cattle Honolulu and feed 'em. Feedlot. That's why they can raise more cattle that way. But I don't think they make any much profit as they would raising 'em on their own land. Fatten on their own, you see? Probably get less cattle, but not all that expense, eh?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So, you think ranching's going to remain profitable?

WT: If any rancher don't make money today, that's poor management, that's all. When I first worked with the ranch, we only get maybe about 11 cents a pound for the beef. When we make 16 cents, by gosh, you're rich. Well, labor was cheap, too, that time. Everything was cheap. There's not much demand for meat. But as it went up. . . . Right after the war, meat went up kind of high--40 cents up to 50 some-odd cents. Then, it dropped down. Up and down, like that. But today, the poorest grade of meat, you get about 80 cents a pound. That's dress meat, I'm telling you. See? So how can you lose? They never pay the cowboy more than what they. . . . You know, not too much more in comparison with before. Before, they pay the guy maybe \$30 a month, \$40 a month. They give you milk. They give you meat. They give you free house rental. They take care hospital bills and all that kind. So, the guy pretty well-off. Today, you might get \$500 a month, but you got to buy your own meat. Some of 'em get house; some, they don't get a house. They no more free milk, and all that kind of stuff. I don't think they allow you to raise anything around the place. Before, they give you a house with a couple acres of land. You plant your own vegetables. You raise chickens, or pigs, or anything like that. They go hunting, get free meat. Pay may be small, but there's all that benefits you get outside. But, of course, the wage has gone up, and everything has gone up.

But the thing is, the old people died off. Then, the new owners come in. Even their own kids, they don't run the ranch like how the old dads and the grandparents, how they run the ranch. They [the old people] not greedy. They don't overstock. Today, if plenty rain, they bring in more cattle. Plenty. They raise more cattle. More, more, more. But no more reserve behind, eh? No more holdover paddocks, you see? And you go hit one dry spell like this, no place to move your cattle, eh? Then, they die. What the hell is worse than having cattle die all over the place? Just yesterday, a guy told me. He said, "By gosh, how can I make a report? Whom shall I report to? The damn cattle dying all over right around the road there and stinking."

I told him, "First of all, call the Board of Health or something like that. Let them see what they can do about it."

Then, he told me, "By gosh, the damn cattle dying all over the place." Not too far from where they live, you see? I know that was going to happen, because these ranches, they raise and overstock. No more reserve. And they get water, too. Now, they better off. But before, no more water.

The ranch, they don't have this government support, where they put reservoirs and all that, but they have their water holes and their tanks. They figure, well, the rainy time, all right, they have a system, way up in the hills, that's grazing land up there. During the summer, plenty rain up there. Plenty grass. When rain, they move everything way up the hill, and the lower places there, they

reserve that. Because up ma uka, too cold, and the grass don't grow because too cold. So, they move the cattle. They open the gates, the cattle come down more. And as they go down, then they get down the more swampy land and rainy belt. There's swamp water and all that. So, they put their cattle there. Then, they try sell their beef out before the winter come. Sell everything. Go to market, sell 'em. Get rid of 'em. And keep your cows and calves down in the wet place. As soon as the rains come back up ma uka, you open the gates. They all go back up. All these big ranches, they have [land] from the beach to the mountain. But we poor guys here, we just have one little place, and that's all we have. But then, you got to make sure that you have some reserve for the bad time, eh?

WN: You think the small ranches are still going to survive?

WT: Oh, yeah. The only thing is, as the parents die--the old people go--the kids come along, they sell that land. People come in, and they sell it for subdivisions and all that kind. That's the only thing. That's the only way they get out of business. The old people, they don't sell. Young guy, what the hell want to go up there on a ranch, eh? Money, money. Big money. But they don't know taxes eat 'em up.

WN: Well, okay. It was very interesting, Mr. Thompson. Thank you very much.

WT: Well, that's all right, that's all right.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

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